The Letters of

JOHN RUSKIN

to Lord and Lady Mount-Temple

Edited and with an Introduction by

John Lewis Bradley

Ohio State University Press

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The frantic, indeed psychotic obsession of John Ruskin for a young girl named Rose La Touche constitutes probably the most terrible (and, unfortunately, protracted, and, in the end, tragic) period in the life of that Victorian genius.

In recent years, the publication of previously suppressed documents relating to the affair, which ended with Rose's death in a kind of religious insanity and which contributed decisively to the madness in which Ruskin spent his last dozen or more years, has inevitably made the story one of the central points in Ruskin biography, not only because it has a quite horrid fascination of its own, but also because it throws much light on Ruskin's complex and desperately unhappy personality.

These letters are documents of unusual value for the fresh light they shed on a crucial phase of Ruskin's life and for the incidental illustrations they offer of the breadth of his intellectual interests and the virtually obsessive nature of his work in many fields. Furthermore, unlike many similar collections, this one constitutes a connected drama and a coherent psychological narrative.

John Lewis Bradley is associate professor of English at the Ohio State University. He is the editor of the collection *Ruskin's Letters from Venice, 1851-52.*

Designed by P. David Horton

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For E. P. B., J. B., and R. N. B.

Preface

IN THE NOBLE TRADITION of English epistolary art—now so sadly waning—the position of John Ruskin remains to be evaluated. Unlike the correspondence of other eminent Victorians such as Eliot, Thackeray, and Clough, the turbulent letters of Ruskin, amounting to many thousands and scattered throughout the world, have yet to be assembled, edited, and presented complementary to his major writings. Certainly, Ruskin was a capacious correspondent who wrote lengthily to myriad persons about myriad subjects. Indeed, no incident seemed too inconspicuous to record, no correspondent too insignificant to address; for Ruskin cast his net widely, and while his letters do not consistently discriminate between the trivial and the relevant, they sustain a high level of pertinence in terms of the social and aesthetic questions which bedeviled the Victorians. In fact, his intensity of feeling, comprehension of vision, and passionate concern for truth, as they play over the restlessness of the age, define, evoke, or interpret for the twentieth century, as no other pen is able, the numerous problems confronting a troubled and perplexed people.

No less perplexed than his fellow-countrymen was John Ruskin himself; but his bewilderment took, to his utter misfortune, heterogeneous forms. And there seems small doubt but that his torrents of prose on subjects so diverse as architecture, botany, art ancient and modern, geology, the state of society, and innumerable other components of Victorian ex-

perience derive, in part at least, from his concern for the "condition of England." His major—and many minor—works can, in fact, be read as stormy manifestations of anxieties about sundry contemporary issues. Similarly, these apprehensions are also evident in the letters he wrote his many correspondents. But Ruskin was not only disquieted over the vexing enigmas of his time. He was also the victim, from his earliest years, of emotional turmoil. And his personal problems come confusedly to the fore in scattered references in prose works and in at least two large collections of letters, one of which deals with his ill-contracted marriage.[1] The other is the present volume in which signal emphasis falls upon Ruskin's disastrous courtship of Rose La Touche, the ethereal Irish girl who died young.

But before introducing the *dramatis personae* of this correspondence, a word on the present edition seems appropriate. *The Letters of John Ruskin to Lord and Lady Mount-Temple* grew out of a previous editorial undertaking of mine, *Ruskin's Letters from Venice, 1851-52.*[2] During the preparation of the latter volume, it became constantly clearer that of approximately twenty-five volumes of Ruskin's correspondence already published—including two sturdy volumes in the Library Edition[3] of his *Works*—the editorial procedures were frequently haphazard and, in general, inadequate. In sequence after sequence of his letters one noted faulty transcription, disregard for textual accuracy, incorrect identification, inadequate annotation and, in one case at least, bowdlerizing of considerable magnitude. Furthermore, dubious use of Ruskin's letters appeared in biographical studies. Wrenched out of context, a portion of a larger correspondence would be used—sometimes with excisions made in individual letters—to elucidate some phase of Ruskin's career or life; and sometimes letters incorrectly dated were employed to illuminate an in-

[1] *John Ruskin and Effie Gray: The Story of John Ruskin, Effie Gray and John Everett Millais Told for the First Time in Their Unpublished Letters,* ed. Admiral Sir William James (New York, 1947). Hereafter referred to as James.

[2] New Haven, 1955.

[3] The Library Edition of *The Works of Ruskin,* ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (39 vols.; London, 1903-12). Hereafter referred to as *Works.*

cident after, or antecedent to, their actual writing. For these reasons, as well as in the interests of future Ruskin biographers, it seemed pertinent to consider the Mount-Temple correspondence in the fullest extent possible. For until Ruskin's letters are conscientiously edited, an impartial and objective biographical and critical estimate of him will not be feasible. In a sense, then, the letters to Lord and Lady Mount-Temple form a conspicuous part of the large jigsaw puzzle that is the life and work of John Ruskin.

The collecting of as many letters as possible from Ruskin to Lord and Lady Mount-Temple commenced hopefully, for 137 of the 234 letters of this edition are in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York. Thus over one-half the manuscript was immediately at hand. Further enquiries at customary academic sources yielded a good many more; and private owners, with one lamentable exception, who ultimately succumbed, were extremely generous in permitting the use of their letters. In fact, except for one trying experience, the search for, and acquisition of, letters progressed smoothly and pleasantly. But this is not to suggest that every letter Ruskin wrote the Mount-Temples is here presented. Unquestionably, some are missing, though not as many as might at first be supposed. A cursory glance at the letters shows that Ruskin concentrated his epistolary addresses to the Mount-Temples in 1866-68 and 1870-72, times of tension in his relations with Rose La Touche. It is also apparent that his correspondence with them increased—but not in emotional intensity—with the development of the St. George's Guild. However, the range of the sequence—from 1856 until 1888—while broad, is, in one sense, limited by the intensity of the relationship between Ruskin and Lord and Lady Mount-Temple to those times when he experienced emotional or intellectual stress.

To establish a clear text was the obligation subsequent to the gathering of available letters. Fortunately, a large part of the correspondence existed, as noted, in manuscript form in the Pierpont Morgan Library; this, of course, greatly facilitated the solution of textual problems. But for some letters recourse to photostatic copies was the only way of obtaining their inclusion in this edition. And, regarding the few Mount-

Temple letters first printed in the *Works*, I have, with some reluctance, been compelled to rely upon the transcriptions of Cook and Wedderburn as the originals cannot be traced. Another small but important group of six letters was most kindly copied by the owner. The result, then, was a large manuscript, deriving mostly from original or photostatic sources, all illustrative of the numerous quirks of Ruskin's letter-writing art. And those idiosyncrasies are, wherever possible, retained in the present edition. Consequently, Ruskin's odd spellings and excessive use of dashes remain, for deletion or "tidying-up" of any sort would result in failure to evoke the tone and tenor of the letters and, ultimately, in misrepresentation of the man himself. Thus only minor normalizations are made: all new paragraphs are indented, full stops are added where Ruskin, in his haste, omitted them, and, very rarely, another punctuation mark—a comma, for instance—is supplied to clarify the meaning or intention of a passage. Where departure from the normally acceptable is flagrant the editorial *sic* is inserted. But emendations are kept to a rigid minimum, so that the reader may have before him a text as close as possible to the original.

Ruskin was notoriously casual in the dating of his correspondence. And as readers will observe, the initial annotation for many of the letters concerns the attempt—not untouched by a quiet desperation—of the editor to establish a precise date. Indeed, the time of writing is one of the most important and bewildering aspects of the editing of this text. And it is hoped that critics—kind and unkind—will not consider the editor dwells too long upon, and seems to make too much of, the dating of individual letters. In only two cases does an envelope supply a date; on other occasions either the day and the month or the day, the month, and the year are given. Quite often a letter has no date at all. But internal evidence—a reference to a lecture, an echo of a phrase in Ruskin's diary, a social engagement, or a comment on his work in progress—often provides the clue that delivers the editor from unhappy ignorance. On occasion, though, one must admit defeat—as in Letters 47 and 128—and finally give a date that only by courtesy could be termed satisfactory.

One of the more agreeable tasks of an editor is to express his appreciation to those persons and organizations that have assisted him. I wish, first, to thank the American Philosophical Society for two extremely generous grants which enabled me to work in England. Another, who aided me materially but who remains anonymous, also has my deepest appreciation. Officials of the John Rylands Library in Manchester, of the Sterling Memorial Library at Yale, of the Cambridge University Library, and of the Cornell University Library have kindly answered numerous inquiries and supplied photostats of necessary documents. To Sir Stanley Unwin and to the officials of Allen and Unwin acting for the Ruskin Literary Trustees I record my appreciation for their permission to reproduce material they control. To Frederick B. Adams, Director of the Pierpont Morgan Library, as well as to Herbert Cahoon and Mary Kenway, both of his staff, I owe a deep debt of gratitude for their constant help. To the late Countess Mountbatten and her archivist, Mrs. Georgiana Blois, I am also indebted for generous assistance and considerable interest. Neither can anyone involved in Ruskin studies fail to express appreciation to Helen Gill Viljoen. To Lewis Horrox I am most grateful for his invaluable contributions to this edition of letters. A number of other persons—in the United States, Great Britain, and Ireland—have also given generously of time and knowledge; to the following, then, I would also record my gratitude: George Goodspeed, Nancy Devine, Van Aken Burd, Marjorie Wynne, Dr. Charles Dickson, Mrs. Michael Wentworth Beaumont, Peter Quennell, Mrs. R. E. G. Carolin, Graham Reynolds, Brian Connell, James Dearden, and John Hewitt Mitchell.

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The Letters of John Ruskin to Lord and Lady Mount-Temple

Introduction

ALTHOUGH the tragic relationship of Ruskin and Rose La Touche tends to dominate the Mount-Temple correspondence, there are a number of attendant themes and motifs informing this edition; some of them will be briefly mentioned here. For instance, Ruskin came, through Lady Mount-Temple, to a growing awareness, in the sixties, of spiritualism, and he devotes a number of letters to questions, doubts, and comments upon psychic phenomena. He also says a good deal about the composition of his works, and letter after letter dwells on the *Lectures on Art,* given in Oxford in 1870, as well as on those university lectures eventually published as *Aratra Pentelici* and *The Eagle's Nest.* One also finds Ruskin touching upon such important writings as *Fors Clavigera* and *Proserpina;* his plans for the latter work are revealing of his methods of composition. Approximately a dozen letters concern the early stages of the St. George's Guild. And, as is customary in Ruskin's other letters, Victorian figures of considerable importance pass through this correspondence. Thus there are brief but illuminating references to Laurence Oliphant, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Carter Hall, William and Mary Howitt, Stopford Brooke, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and a number of others. Furthermore, the correspondence teems with cursory remarks upon his Chaucerian studies, his interest in Egyptology, his sense of mission over the Slade professorship,

his relations with Carlyle, his family problems, his recollections of occasions both pleasing and trying, his sense of urgency, and, in the closing letters, his terrible loneliness and appalling isolation manifest by pathetic recourse to the vocabulary of the child. Thus this correspondence is a treasury of information about the multifarious interests and activities of the harassed Victorian prophet.

But in any consideration of the Mount-Temple letters it is first to the Ruskin-La Touche tragedy—and the chief persons concerned—that one inevitably turns. At the vortex of that tragedy is, of course, Ruskin himself. Unavoidably, the question arises: What sort of man was he? What was this Ruskin of the '60's and '70's like, this man in his middle age who, overshadowed by a marriage that had terminated catastrophically—even scandalously—in 1854, had become hopelessly enmeshed in an amatory relationship with a girl nearly thirty years his junior? What was the state of mind of this man who so painfully unburdened himself to Lady Mount-Temple, a woman whose close confidence he had not enjoyed prior to the growth of his affection for Rose La Touche? While such questions cannot be completely answered, the figure of the Ruskin of these years can, perhaps, be brought out of the gloom and seen a little more clearly in relation to the tragedy in which he is the chief actor.

Most apparent about the Ruskin of the '60's is a growing discursiveness, an almost maniacal tendency to dart from one lecture hall to another, from one town to the next, to talk, and to write as well, on strikingly varied subjects. With this in mind it is illuminating to see the process starting, slowly at first, and gradually gathering momentum. From 1860-63 Ruskin's productivity was, for him, relatively modest. The last volume of *Modern Painters*—completed only under parental prodding—appeared in 1860, the same year as *Unto this Last;* shortly thereafter came the *Essays on Political Economy* (later known as *Munera Pulveris).* There are also a few newspaper letters, some scattered lectures, and some remarks on Giotto and Turner, on Reynolds and Holbein. For an ordinary man this is a most respectable array of publications and appearances. But not for Ruskin. Then, with the death

of his father in 1864 and the intensification of his passion for Rose La Touche, he casts himself into one activity after another. From 1864 until 1870 there is a storm of letters to newspapers, articles in technical journals, public lectures—in London (at the Royal Institution, at Camberwell, and at Woolwich), Dublin, and Cambridge—as well as speeches on public affairs such as the Eyre Defence Fund. During these years he also publishes *Sesame and Lilies*, *The Ethics of the Dust*, *Time and Tide*, and *The Queen of the Air*. On the threshold of the new decade he becomes Slade Professor at Oxford and commences the *Lectures on Art*. Cook and Wedderburn characterize this period in the following terms:

> He talks and writes of books and how to read them; of the sphere and education of women; of soldiers and their duties; architects and their functions; servants and their loyalties; masters and their duties. He discusses now the elements of crystallisation or the denudation of the Alps; and now the merits of the manner in which the Jamaica insurrection was suppressed or the policy of non-intervention in European quarrels. He treats of the mythology of Greece and of Egypt and devotes much attention to Greek art, but touches also upon the designs of Burne-Jones, the pictures of Phil Morris, the porches of Abbeville, the tombs of Verona. The laws of work divide his attention with the limitations of engraving; and he passes from the designs upon Greek coins to the management of railways and the prospects of co-operative industry. . . His literary work, now as throughout his life, was accompanied, it should be remembered, by corresponding activity with the pencil and the brush.[1]

Doubtless, Ruskin was driven by some "man within," compelling him to abnormal endeavor. As one notes this frantic activity one also realizes—when the letters to Lord and Lady Mount-Temple are read as an accompaniment to such frenzied actions—that Ruskin is caught between his hopeless passion, from which he tries to escape by work, and the unnatural activity imposed by that work. Such a situation of intense emotional and intellectual pressures can only effect dire harm upon a nature imbued with superabundant energy. The out-

[1] *Works*, XVIII, xviii-xix.

come is inevitable. And in July, 1871, Ruskin falls dangerously ill at Matlock.

The illness of 1871—diagnosed as a form of "internal inflammation"—has been variously ascribed to the domestic responsibilities attendant upon his father's death, to the marriage of his cousin, Joan Agnew (who came to Denmark Hill in 1864, upon the death of Ruskin senior, to manage the household), to the extraordinary amount of work he did in the later sixties, to the sudden death of Anne, his old nurse, and, finally, to the slow death of his domineering and egotistical mother. All doubtless contributed to the collapse of 1871 and the "acute mental pain" of which Ruskin speaks in *Fors Clavigera*.[2] But the main reason, as the letters to the Mount-Temples show, surely lies in the emotional crises of the sixties through which Ruskin passed in his desperate longing for Rose. Time after time, with a deadening regularity, the affair breaks in upon his work to disturb him, to drive him to rash outbursts and wild expressions of passion and pain, and, ultimately, to bedevil him into physical debility and mental disorder.

Never can Ruskin escape his mental anguish. Awake, it tortures him into writing the letters to Lady Mount-Temple; asleep, he is plagued by dreams suggestive of emotional unrest. In his work, the affair intrudes; rose metaphors, puns upon roses, and drawings of roses abound.[3] Awake or asleep, working or resting, in private or in public, Ruskin has not a moment of peace, and, to the dismay of the reader, his obsessions only seem aggravated after the Matlock illness.

Recuperating from the illness, Ruskin plunged into work again, and the same pattern recurred almost immediately: hectic work interrupted by emotional disturbance and culminating in a cruel climax. In the summer of 1872 Ruskin rushed back from a Continental tour to enjoy a brief interlude of happiness with Rose—an interlude painfully terminated a few weeks later, in the autumn. From that time forward, the letters to Lady Mount-Temple become more infrequent, with

[2] *Works*, XXVII, *222*.

[3] See, for instance, the title page of *Fors Clavigera* (*Works*, XXVII, 3).

even Rose's death, in the spring of 1875, apparently eliciting no letter from Ruskin to his faithful friend. Then, from 1876 until the last letter in 1888, one witnesses the disastrous spectacle of a mind crumbling under incessant attacks of madness. Gradually, Ruskin moves inexorably toward the darkness that, in 1889, is to engulf him wholly. As he does so he reverts to pet names, childish imaginings, and pathetic longings. The concluding letters are a poignant record of emotional and intellectual bankruptcy.

Such is the Ruskin of the Mount-Temple correspondence—at first, immensely energetic, feverishly alert, and, for a brief time, capable of living two demanding lives—the emotional and the intellectual—simultaneously. But the sixties have to be paid for, and after the Matlock illness the decline hastens. At the end, one faces the despondent picture of the prophet in his ruin, pathetically disconsolate, surrounded by shadows, lonely, isolated, forlorn, and clinging to any wreckage of friendship. It is—as one looks back upon the courage, fervor, and nobility of Ruskin's earlier life—an appalling conclusion.

Lady Mount-Temple, both as Ruskin's intermediary with the La Touche family and as recipient of his letters, is a significant figure in Ruskin's complex life. But it is her portion to appear only fleetingly in Victorian memoirs, so that it is not easy to draw a satisfactory portrait of her. It is apparent that she enjoyed a generous circle of friends, that she was an admired hostess, that she followed contemporary literary and artistic movements, and that she was greatly interested in a variety of religious attitudes, beliefs, and manifestations. To the latter end she initiated the Broadlands Conferences in 1874 where one might find, at the same gathering, a preaching Negress, a Quaker, a Shaker, an atheist, a spiritualist, an East End Socialist, and a prophet of any sort at all. That such persons sometimes caused confusion is illustrated by the following:

> The universality of the invitation to Broadlands did not, however, go so far as one of the housemaids supposed when on going into a bed-room, which she believed to be untenanted, she saw a mysterious black head appearing from beneath the bed-clothes,

and rushed away screaming out that the Devil was there. It turned out that the guest was only a good negro who had arrived late the night before.[4]

In spite of the disparity of the visitors, Broadlands—the country seat her husband inherited from his stepfather, Lord Palmerston—seems to have been suffused with heavenly light, divine grace, and similar celestial luminescence. Such a variety of interests suggests, unfortunately, the capricious, and, in reading, albeit fragmentarily, about this well-intentioned woman, one receives here and there a hint of the sanctimonious as well.

Lady Mount-Temple was born Georgiana Tollemache in 1822; she was the daughter of Admiral Tollemache and the youngest of several sisters. She apparently received the conventional upbringing of her class, marrying, in 1848, the Hon. William Cowper, who became Cowper-Temple in 1869 and Lord Mount-Temple in 1880.[5] She spent her life doing good deeds—giving, working among the needy, and, when not busy with her devotions, nursing endless numbers of people. She survived her husband by thirteen years, dying in 1901.

Lady Mount-Temple's friendship with Ruskin passes through several phases. She first appears in his life in 1840, which winter he passed in Rome ostensibly recovering from consumption and, perhaps, from a blighted love affair. Ruskin recorded in *Praeterita* his initial awareness of the slender, gray-eyed English girl, whom he first saw at the Church of Santa Maria in Ara Coeli:

But the fact was, that at services of this kind there was always a chance of seeing, at intervals, above the bowed heads of the Italian crowd, for an instant or two before she also stooped—or sometimes, eminent in her grace above a stunted group of them,—a fair English girl, who was not only the admitted Queen of beauty in the English circle of that winter in Rome, but was so, in the kind of beauty which I had only hitherto dreamed of as possible,

[4] E. C. Clifford, *Broadlands As It Was* (London, 1890), p. 15.

[5] Subsequent to the Introduction, whichever name is appropriate to the specific year is used.

but never yet seen living: statuesque severity with womanly sweetness joined.[6]

Characteristically, Ruskin idealized her from afar and did not meet her until many years later—in 1854 in London. And it is not until ten years after that—at the end of 1863—that their friendship assumes any closeness or continuity. Then, through a mutual interest in spiritualism, they exchanged letters and attended séances; it would seem, too, that Lady Mount-Temple developed Ruskin's interest in occult phenomena, for some years later—in the seventies—we find him writing about the occult and also reading papers to the Metaphysical Society.

But while spiritualism may have developed their friendship beyond the stage of pleasing acquaintance, it was the La Touche problem that cemented it. In the middle sixties Ruskin introduced her to the La Touche family and then Lady Mount-Temple became truly his confidante, his "tutelary power" in his great sorrow. It was during those years, too, that the pet names, invariably a sign with Ruskin of emotional involvement, are used. Thus he addresses her as "Philè," "Isola Bella," and, in later years, "Mama" or "Grannie." She, on the other hand, adheres to "St. C." (St. Chrysostom, the "golden-mouthed"). Slowly though the friendship started, it developed speedily in the middle and late sixties.

After Rose's death in 1875 Lady Mount-Temple and Ruskin sustained their close association for a short time, as the letter of August 10, 1875 (Letter 210) indicates. Also in the seventies they exchanged visits between Broadlands and Brantwood, the latter becoming Ruskin's permanent residence in 1871. But with encroaching years, the death of Lord Mount-Temple, and Ruskin's frequent attacks of madness and attendant withdrawal from mundane matters, the correspondence tapered off even if their mutual affection did not.

The Lady Mount-Temple of these letters is not easy to evoke. Unquestionably, she possessed some receptive quality, some sympathetic appeal, that made the sensitive, distraught

[6] *Works*, XXXV, 277.

Ruskin turn to her. And while in some letters she could chide him, the majority suggest that she remained staunch and loyal, especially through the times of greatest strain. She went to Ireland on his behalf, spoke candidly to Rose's parents, tried to represent Ruskin justly and to pour oil on extremely agitated waters. Sometimes, however, she seems misguided—because of inadequate or biased information—in her advocacy of his case. And this, perhaps, has caused some Ruskin critics to be a little hard on her. But the pre-eminent picture of her, so far as this correspondence is concerned, is of a patient, well-meaning, earnest guide and counselor.

William Francis Cowper—later Lord Mount-Temple—was born in 1811, one of the children of Earl Cowper and his wife, who was a daughter of Lord and Lady Melbourne. She subsequently married Lord Palmerston. William Cowper, after attending Eton, making the Grand Tour, and serving briefly in the army, entered public life and, over many years, occupied numerous governmental positions. Collingwood summarizes his useful career succinctly:

> He began life as aide-de-camp to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland in 1830, and went into Parliament in 1835; he was a Lord of the Treasury in 1845, then a Lord of the Admiralty, then President of the Board of Health, Vice-President of the Board of Trade, Paymaster-General, Chief Commissioner of Works, Vice-President of the Education Department of the Privy Council, Chairman of Mr. Fawcett's Committee on the Enclosure Acts; it was he who saved Epping Forest in 1871, and he was prime mover in the preservation of open spaces and in granting allotments to the poor; he passed the Medical Bill in 1858, the Thames Embankment Bill in 1862-3, and the Courts of Justice Building Bill in 1863; the "Cowper-Temple Clause," to secure the reading of the Bible in Board Schools, was his; he was the great reconstructor of the London Parks and inventor of the scheme for distributing the Park flowers to hospitals, workhouses and schools.[7]

There is, however, another side to this man. Apart from following his stepfather, Lord Palmerston, so firmly into public life, he was also a man of saintly inclination, a man who seriously considered entering the church to avoid "the immi-

[7] *Ruskin Relics* (New York, 1904), pp. 216-17.

nent dominion of the sins which it seemed so difficult to avoid." Like his wife, he was devoted to piety, good deeds, and Christian charity; like her, too, he was an ardent advocate of the Broadlands Conferences and was constantly opposing cruelty and injustice. The subject of a memorial[8] by his wife, he appears to lack her sanctimoniousness, and his Christianity seems of a more genuine kind than hers.

Lord Mount-Temple played two roles—each of them "practical" and legal—in Ruskin's life. The first came about through an inquiry by Rose La Touche's father in the summer of 1871 as to the circumstances surrounding the annulment of Ruskin's marriage. From Ruskin's recourse to legal documents, medical examination, and the moral support of the Bishop of Limerick, it is clear that the rumors about his sexual inadequacy had reached Rose's ears, for he is extremely anxious that she not be deceived about him or separated from him by means of lies and slander. Mount-Temple apparently assisted Ruskin considerably in the legal negotiations, so that, by the end of July, 1871, Ruskin's mental state—despite his serious illness of that year—seems, temporarily, more tranquil, less agitated.

Mount-Temple again appears in a worldly role in this correspondence as one of the first trustees of the Guild of St. George, which grew out of St. George's Fund. The Guild —a curious blend of the quixotic and the utilitarian—about which Ruskin writes so much in *Fors Clavigera*, came into being in the 1870's. And Mount-Temple is seen as recipient of about a dozen letters concerning Ruskin's plans for the Guild, monetary contributions, the legality and prospectus of the organization, its ideals and aspirations. In all these affairs Mount-Temple played an active role until his resignation as trustee in 1877. There is no doubt, too, that while he was not consistently involved in Ruskin's emotional problems, he was at least a sympathetic and loyal friend to whom the harassed lover could turn.

If Lady Mount-Temple, the recipient of nearly all these letters, is but dimly realized, Rose La Touche (1848-75), the main subject of them, seems singularly elusive and wraithlike

[8] *Memorials of Lord Mount-Temple* (printed for private circulation, 1890).

when one tries to imagine the sort of person she was. Certainly, some facts are known. She was one of three children born to the well-to-do and socially prominent Mr. and Mrs. John La Touche of Harristown, County Kildare. Her parents seem contrasting personalities, her father essentially the able banker and country gentleman—Master of the Kildare Hunt —and her mother a devotee of artistic pursuits. From Margaret Ferrier Young's *Letters of a Noble Woman*[9] Mrs. La Touche emerges a good linguist, an artist of modest talents, and a novelist—of a distinctly minor order. The letters of Mrs. La Touche reveal a cultured woman fond of traveling, sensitive to artistic beauty, a lover of nature, and, perhaps, not strongly attracted to hunting and similar activities.

Of the three children born to the La Touches Rose seems the most gifted. Her sister Emily (1844-68) shared Rose's artistic interests and, incidentally, greatly attracted Ruskin who, during her short life, exchanged a number of letters with her, letters as yet unpublished and of considerable biographical value. To Ruskin Emily became known as "Wisie" and is so spoken of in the Mount-Temple correspondence. Rose's brother Percy (1846-1921), who inherited Harristown House, was a member of the Turf Club, an honorary member of the Jockey Club, and, in general, best known for equestrian pastimes. His few appearances in this correspondence center on his broken engagement to Ruskin's cousin Joan Agnew (later Mrs. Arthur Severn); their engagement was brief, unhappy, and a complicating factor in Ruskin's relations with Rose.

Sometime in 1858—records do not agree upon exactly when —Mrs. La Touche requested Ruskin to become the family drawing master; to this he agreed and has left, in *Praeterita*,[10] an engrossing, if not wholly accurate, account of his first meeting with Rose, who, apparently, found him "*so* ugly." Shortly, he was on excellent terms with the family, and the inevitable pet names followed: Emily, as noted, became "Wisie"; Mrs. La Touche was called "Lacerta"—ominous in view of later events—"to signify that she had the grace and wisdom of the

[9] London, 1908.

[10] *Works*, XXXV, 525-26.

serpent without its poison";[11] and Ruskin himself was called "Archigosaurus" and, more often, "St. C." or "St. Crumpet," which Emily insisted also stood for "St. Chrysostom." Typically, Ruskin is again reaching out for some sort of closeness, some affection, to quell his emotional starvation.

In 1861 Ruskin paid his first visit to the La Touches at Harristown and pleasing are the records he has left about playing with the children, building a bridge across the Liffey, and reading *Marmion* to them. Across these merry times, however, falls the strange shadow of Rose—the little red-capped "wild" rose—with her "queer little fits." "She walked," Ruskin says, "like a little white statue through the twilight woods, talking solemnly."[12] In this same year, Ruskin tells Norton that "Little Rose is terribly frightened about me, and writes letters to get me to come out of Bye-path Meadow—and I won't."[13] Then, in the winter of 1861, she falls ill, and, in reporting this to his father, Ruskin reproduces a piece of dialogue sent him by Mrs. La Touche of a conversation between herself and her daughter as to which of them he wishes to see; this brief interchange is suggestive of a further complication—jealousy—in his relations with Rose:

> Mrs. L. "Rosie, don't you wish St. C. would come home?"
> Rosie. "Yes, indeed I do. How tiresome of him!"
> Mrs. L. "Do you think he wants us at all?"
> Rosie. "Well, perhaps he does. I think he wants to see me, Mamma."
> Mrs. L. "And doesn't he want to see me?"
> Rosie. "Well—you know—well Mamma, I think he likes your letters quite as much as yourself, and you write so very often —and I can't write often. So he must want to see me."[14]

Individually, these incidents—her illness, her interest in Ruskin's religious state, her prattle about his visits—seem no more than isolated matters of inconsiderable consequence.

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[11] *Ibid.*, XXXV, 529.

[12] *Ibid.*, XXXV, lxvii.

[13] *Letters of John Ruskin to Charles Eliot Norton*, ed. Charles Eliot Norton (2 vols.; Boston, 1904), I, 111. Hereafter referred to as Norton.

[14] *Works*, XXXVI, 399.

But, collectively, and falling as they do, within the compass of a few months, they sound the main themes that are to burden Rose and Ruskin to their deaths.

From 1862 until 1865, because of pressure from the La Touche family, the paths of Ruskin and Rose do not cross. There are echoes of other illnesses, of her anxieties over his spiritual condition, but her relations with him remain quiescent. Commencing in 1866, however, Rose's life seems to become a purgatory of confused hopes, religious fanaticism, attacks of delirium, passionate revolt against parental intrusion, and revulsion toward Ruskin countered the next moment by avowals of love for him. Only brief periods of calmness seem to illuminate these harrowing years. Rose visits England, confides in Lady Mount-Temple, writes the novelist George MacDonald of her difficulties, and at intervals sees Ruskin. Her difficulties are echoed by Ruskin—at times most specifically—in his letters to Lady Mount-Temple between 1866 and 1872. Indeed, Rose's agonies are as acute as those of Ruskin himself—so acute, in fact, that her death on May 25, 1875, must have come as the most blessed of reliefs from a terrestrial existence that had ultimately become an appalling complex of mental and physical torture.

PART I

Part I[1]

Letters 1 to 25

[1856]—February 19, 1866

THE INITIAL or introductory letters show the slow development of Ruskin's friendship with Mrs. Cowper through their mutual interest in spiritualism—an interest not unattended on Ruskin's part by a certain skepticism and even levity. This movement of the correspondence concludes with Ruskin's attempting to effect a first meeting between Mrs. Cowper and the La Touche family, who resided in London during the winter of 1865-66. It is at Letter 25—dated February 19, 1866—that Ruskin is seen on the edge of a crisis in his relations with Rose La Touche. How this is reached might be briefly pointed out; to do so it is necessary to return to the early 1860's.

In the late summer of 1861 Ruskin, paying his initial visit to Harristown, was already aware of his special interest in Rose. It was also a time when his faith in his deeply imbued evangelicalism was on trial. So sorely was he tried that he brought his spiritual problem to Mrs. La Touche, who, Ruskin later told his father,[2] made him promise not to indicate publicly any change in his spiritual attitude for the next ten

[1] To facilitate the reading of the manuscript the letters are divided into five parts. At appropriate intervals, the editor provides a brief commentary designed to place the correspondence that follows in perspective and to effect temporal connections between various phases of the letters.

[2] *Works*, XXXIV, 662.

years. But one can be sure that Rose, who suffered mental disturbances as well as religious misgivings throughout the early sixties, knew of the grave problem agitating her admirer. Only a few months later, in May, 1862, Mrs. La Touche offered Ruskin a cottage adjoining the Harristown estate, but within two months of that time, in July, 1862, some altercation with the La Touches had occurred which caused Ruskin to remove to the Continent. As he wrote his close friend Paulina, Lady Trevelyan: "The Irish plan fell through in various unspeakable —somewhat sorrowful ways. I've had a fine quarrel with Rosie ever since for not helping me enough."[3] This separation from Rose, although palliated by epistolary exchanges,[4] was, both at the time and in retrospect, a great blow to Ruskin, as Letter 26 to Lady Mount-Temple indicates. There he speaks of it as rendering him "very close to death." Also, in Letter 43—dated September 29, 1866—he maintains he has not had "one happy hour" since Rose's parents separated him from her. And his diary for December 21, 1865, states clearly that he had not seen Rose for the past three years.[5] Plainly, while permitting exchange of letters, Mr. and Mrs. La Touche came between their daughter and her lover.

That Ruskin suffered severely between 1862 and 1865 is also attested to by letters he addressed to that minor novelist and sometime parson, George MacDonald (1824-1905), to whom Mrs. La Touche introduced him in 1863 in the hope that MacDonald would exercise a beneficial influence over him. While MacDonald plays his most important role in this affair in 1872, he did advise and assist Ruskin in its earlier stages. And it is to him that the now notorious "mousepet" letter of February 8, 1865, is directed. Writing on his birthday, Ruskin says: "I can't love anybody except my Mouse-pet in Ireland, who nibbles me to the very sick-death with weariness to see her."[6]

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[3] *Works*, XXXIV, 414.

[4] See Letter 37.

[5] *The Diaries of John Ruskin*, ed. Joan Evans and J. H. Whitehouse (3 vols.; Oxford, 1956, 1958, and 1959), II, 585. Hereafter referred to as *Diaries*.

[6] Greville MacDonald, *Reminiscences of a Specialist* (London, 1932), p. 109.

With the new year—1866—Ruskin saw a good deal of Rose and on February 2, proposed to her, only to be told that he must wait three years—until she became of age. February 2 remained a hallowed day for Ruskin ever after, as is apparent, for example, from his public notice of it in *Fors Clavigera* in 1877[7] and in 1879[8] when writing Gladstone's daughter. It is with the refusal of his hand in February, 1866, then, that Ruskin turns to Mrs. Cowper for assistance, thus initiating the outpouring of his emotions, a torrent that is to rage for the next several years.

[7] *Works*, XXIX, 60.
[8] *Ibid.*, XXXVII, 273.

[1856][9]

Dear M^r^ Cowper

I am *very* sorry but I cannot: I am oppressed with work just now, & those late town dinners are equivalent to the loss of a day, or nearly so,—to a person whose usual bedtime is ten oclock.

Most truly Yours,
With compliments to M^rs^ Cowper
J Ruskin.

[9] Based on the watermark.

Denmark Hill
Tuesday.
[1856–65][10]

Dear M^r^ Cowper,

I shall have much pleasure in accepting Lord and Lady Palmerston's kind invitation—and hope to meet you with faithful punctuality at the Waterloo station on Friday—With best remembrances to M^rs^ Cowper believe me

faithfully Yours
J Ruskin

The Hon. W. Cowper

[10] The formality of this note and the death of Palmerston in 1865 suggest the date ascribed.

Letter 3

Friday [January 1–May 15, 1862][11]

Dear M^rs^ Cowper

I am set upon this talk you promised me, and mean to try for it again tomorrow a little before 12, and it will be of no use to be out—for you'll only have it hanging over you for a fortnight—so you had better get it over—if so it may be—
With afectionate [*sic*] regards—faithfully yours & M^r^ Cowpers,

J Ruskin

—Seriously—you need not mind if you have to be out. I shall be back in ten days from the country, and can then come any day.

[11] The conjectural date is based on the year, 1862, written—not in Ruskin's hand—in the top right corner of the manuscript. Save for part of November and December of this year Ruskin was in England only from December 31, 1861, until May 15, 1862.

Letter 4

[January, 1862–March, 1864][12]

Dear M^rs^ Cowper

I do not know when I have been so vexed, but it is merely impossible to me to come tonight. I did not think of saying "not Thursday" because I had no idea of the thing's being arranged so magnetically quick,—but my sick father & lame mother come home today after four months living up at Norwood, & count upon my dining and passing the evening with them—*any* other day would have done and will do, but I should have to vex them mightily and I prefer to vex myself and inconvenience you.—I will keep myself wholly free after this—don't give me up.

Ever gratefully Yours
J Ruskin

[12] This unsatisfactory date is based on internal evidence regarding the health of the older Ruskins. In October, 1860, Margaret Ruskin incurred lasting lameness from a severe fall; but as late as January 19, 1862 (Norton, I, 125) Ruskin senior was healthy enough. It is likely, then, that this letter was written after the latter date and, of course, before March, 1864, when John James Ruskin died. However, because it seems clear that Ruskin wrote this letter from London, the date can be further restricted to the following time periods: January 19, 1862 to May, 1862; November, 1862; June to early September, 1863; November 14-23, 1863; and December 19, 1863, to March, 1864.

Letter 5

Winnington, Northwich, Friday [December, 1863][13]

Dear Mrs. Cowper,—Thank you for your pretty letter—I'll come and dine, then; there's always a sense of hurry after breakfast. But it will be ten days or a fortnight, yet, before I can get home. I will write to you as soon as I know, and then you have only to tell me your day. Don't tremble; if I can be of use to you at all, it will be in casting out all Fear. If I hurt you it can only be in crushing an uncertain hope. If it should seem even that the Faith of Virgil was founded as firmly as Dante's, and more reasonably, it might be conceived as not the less happy.—With sincere regards to Mr. Cowper, ever faithfully yours,

J. Ruskin.

[13] Ruskin was at Winnington during the time suggested and wrote his father (*Works*, XXXVI, 461) that he expected to see the Cowpers upon his return to London.

Letter 6

[Late December, 1863—early January, 1864][14]

Dear Mrs Cowper

I could not answer in time for post yesterday. I shall leave this at Curzon St & await your return.

I have read that book, (much of it) with much pain; therefore—seriously I will follow up the enquiry in any way in which you can aid me to do so, but I suspect you will find me interrupt all Immaterial proceedings—not from incredulity: but from stupid Solidity. You will find me a fatal Non conductor,—I can neither see nor feel my way anywhere just now.

Thank you for your sympathy in respect of Turner—but you do not know what I have had to bear. Remember, all his great pictures are decayed to absolute death—speaking of colour as living, and all his drawings are being destroyed by picture dealers, or in the National gallery by mildew. I want to speak to you about this the first thing: for unless you can get Lord Palmerston to order something—the whole mass of Turner's drawings in the national gallery will be irreparably destroyed—half their value is gone already; they were exposed without a fire in the low room of the gallery during the repairs of it—all the winter—and are fatally injured—only now in a measure to be saved by the most active superintendence. *I* can do nothing—being too ill but the Trustees have I believe a notion that I want to be Curator—or to appoint a Curator. All I care for is to be quit of responsibility

[14] Textual evidence suggests the date of this letter. Toward its conclusion Ruskin speaks of "this stabbing," which in all probability refers to the apprehension of a man named Stephenson, on December 16, 1863, for damaging Turner's "Regulus Leaving Rome." Stephenson was committed for trial on January 4, 1864, and received six months hard labor. The damage, according to the records of the National Gallery, consisted of "a cut an inch and a quarter long, four *stabs* [italics mine] and four slight chips, the paint being broken off but the canvas not pierced."

—for I have other work on my hands now—but I must write to the Times about it to do my mere duty to the public—(unless you can persuade Lord Palmerston to interfere)[15]—and then there would probably be all sorts of trouble—and no good done—only I can't see the whole National property destroyed without saying so.—The stabbing pictures is nothing—one "cleaner" does more harm in an hour than a charge of bayonets and a volley of grape would:—and my mind has been long made up to the destruction of the whole—So that this stabbing is to me just what the prick of a pin would be to a man who had had his flesh cut off his bones in little bits—as far as a multitude of Shylocks could do it without any Portia conditions—except just that they must leave him alive, or a little alive.

—Sincere regards to Mr Cowper

—Always faithfully Yours,

J Ruskin.

I am heartily glad to hear of better health at Broadlands.

Every one has been ill, of people whom I should like to be well. Wicked people are never ill, I think. But *once* I should have thought the gout came to punish Lord P. for not helping Poland.[16]

[15] Which he had done before, in 1856 (*Works*, XIII, xxxii). On this occasion, however, Palmerston appears not to have interceded.

[16] Earlier in 1863, at the time of the Polish uprising against the Russians.

Letter 7

[1863–64][17]

Dear M^rs^ Cowper

I should have liked—so much—to have come. I would—even after my happy savage life, have endured the tyrannies of London dinner—to meet Maurice,[18] and after long time—Gladstone[19]—and to have had the luxury, in my extreme sulkiness, of making myself as disagreeable to my old acquaintances as anybody could be—in so gracious a presence as yours (or as any insignificant person could be to significant ones). But my old Oxford tutor Osborne Gordon[20] is coming up from Windsor to dine with me, and my great and good painter-friend Rossetti from his den in Cheyne walk, and there's no re-arrangement nor ordination possible. So I look for your sympathy of sunshine with what little remains of good in me, in the morning, and forego the delights of being discomfortable and discomfited.

But it's too bad of you to take advantage of my Clerkmanship in that way, and I was really rather proud of my C-s before—and thought they nodded goodhumouredly at people, and then, to take one [*illegible*] for the letter I can't say—the dogs letter too—you wicked—ungenerous—graciousness—I couldn't have thought it of you! I won't be—if you do such a thing again—any more faithfully yours,

J Ruskin

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[17] This conjectural date is suggested by internal evidence. Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82), the Pre-Raphaelite poet and painter, did not move to Cheyne Walk until late in 1862. And by 1865 his friendship with Ruskin was extremely tenuous. Thus it is only between the dates suggested that the letter could have been written.

[18] Frederick Denison Maurice (1805-72), controversial divine and founder, in 1854, of the Working Men's College at which Ruskin taught and lectured. The most interesting phase of Maurice's relationship with Ruskin is perhaps that concerning *Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds* (see *Works*, XII, 509-72; note especially pp. 561-68).

[19] William Ewart Gladstone (1809-98), four times Prime Minister.

[20] Gordon (1813-83) was Censor of Christ Church, Oxford, and in 1860 was granted the living at Easthampstead, Berks., a parish close to Windsor.

Letter 8

24th Jan. [1864][21]

Dear Mrs. Cowper,—I can dine with you any day after Monday next week, if you are alone; but I want to talk about the Turners, so please don't let anybody else come. I had a long talk with Carlyle yesterday. He says Spiritualism is real witchcraft, and quite wrong (Wicked he meant—no, I mean, he *said*). It is all very wonderful; I have a great notion he's right—he knows a thing or two.—Ever most truly yours,

J. Ruskin.

[21] The references to spiritualism and to Turner (see also Letter 6) make the year ascribed seem correct.

Letter 9

[Early 1864][22]

. I am very grateful to you for having set me in the sight and hearing of this new world. I don't see why one should be unhappy, about anything, if all this is indeed so. I can't quite get over this spiritual spelling, I always excepted—expected—I mean (that's very funny now: the ghosts are teaching me their ways, it seems)—I expected at least, when I got old, and to the hairy gown time, that at least I should be able to rightly spell. (There again two 'at leasts'; my head is certainly in the next world this morning.) But that story of the grapes pleased me best of all. I believe it on Captain Drayton's[23] word—and it is all I want—a pure and absolute miracle, such as that of the loaves. I was always ready to accept miracles—if only I could get clear and straightforward human evidence of it. It was not the New or Old Testament that staggered me, but the (to my mind) absurd and improbable way of relating them. I could believe that Jesus stood on the shore and caused a miraculous draught of fishes, but I could not believe that the disciples thereupon would immediately have begun dining on the broiled fish. I was sorry I went away last night without saying good night to those two stranger gentlemen—but my head was full of things.

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[22] The date ascribed to this fragment seems satisfactory in view of the evidence to substantiate it in *Works,* XVIII, xxxi-xxxii, where Cook and Wedderburn discuss Ruskin's interest in spiritualism.

[23] An ardent spiritualist, mistakenly spoken of as Captain Drayson in Mme. Dunglas Home's *D. D. Home: His Life and Mission* (London, 1888).

Letter 10

[Mid-April, 1864][24]

Dear Mrs. Cowper,—I am too much astonished to be able to think, or speak yet—yet observe, this surprise is a normal state with me; and has been so, this many a day. I am not now more surprised at perceiving spiritual presence, than I have been, since I was a youth, at not perceiving it. The wonder lay always to me, not in miracle, but in the want of it; and now it is more the manner and triviality of manifestation than the fact that amazes me. On the whole I am much happier for it, and very anxious for next time; but there is something also profoundly pitiful, it seems to me, in all that we can conceive of spirits who can't lift a ring without more trouble than Aladdin took to carry his palace, and I suppose you felt that their artistical powers appear decidedly limited. I meant to ask, next time, for the spirit of Paul Veronese, and see whether it, if it comes, can hold a pencil more than an inch long. Thank Mr. Cowper for sending me the bits of paper. Why do you say 'cold daylight'? I should say 'snuffy candle-light' if I were a ghost—I believe—and on the whole decline incense and ask for fresh air. My mind has been for months so entirely numb with pain, and so weary, that I am capable of no violent surprise even from all this, and I go about my usual work as if nothing had happened—but with a pleasant thrill of puzzlement and expectation, breaking into my thoughts every now and then. My Mother's Mother's name was Margaret Ruskin, unmarried; I haven't got at my father's mother yet. I was sorry not to have asked more questions of that disagreeable Bible-reading spirit. Partly, I was afraid of

[24] Both this letter and Letter 11 concern spiritualism and Veronese. It is likely, then, that they were written approximately the same time, and, as internal evidence suggests, Letter 11 was written in the middle of April, 1864.

receiving some answer that would have hurt me, and partly I was dreamy and stupid with wonder—thinking more of the process of tearing the leaf than of enquiring of an oracle, which, besides, I was not altogether clear about its being desirable to do. But if I get Paul Veronese to come, won't I cross-examine him!

Always gratefully,
J. Ruskin.

The tables are very decidedly 'turned' since I wrote to you in a doctorial tone as being able to help *you.*

Letter II

[Mid-April, 1864][25]

Dear Mrs Cowper

Do you mind my writing to you without black decorations —or negative—illumination—at the border? Because it does not in the minutest degree comfort me for my father's death[26] to dirty my fingers every time I write a note.

I have been laying down turf, where mould was, under a fruit wall, that I may always walk there and look at the blossoms at ease: and I've been paving a bit of gravel walk with new pebbles; and I've been paving a little inch of garden walk of that subterranean garden of ash-trees—(I mean that piece of botany for a pun, please—and I think it's original,) —where everything grows upside down, and is fixed instead of watered, with the loveliest little agate-pebble of a good intention of writing to you to say you had'nt hurt me a bit—but (—that pen won't do after all—and this steel one goes through the paper—)—quite other than hurt me—and that I would try and not hurt you.

—Well—no—not yet. I'm not able to take nice things—not even to take talks—, (I *cannot* get a pen—)—yet—so dead I am—I'm afraid of Mrs Howitt[27]—isn't she a "gushing" person? and yet I know she must be nice—and I should try to be nice too—and be *so* tired. I don't want to be prophesied to. To

[25] In the text of this letter it will be seen that Ruskin speaks of "Currant blossom." A diary entry of April 14, 1864 (*Diaries*, II, 584), in which he notes "Work at Currant Blossom," suggests the date ascribed.

[26] Which occurred on March 2, 1864.

[27] The wife of William Howitt (1792-1879), termed a "miscellaneous writer." Both were spiritualists and participated in numerous séances with the celebrated—notorious—D. D. Home. A study of this couple is to be found in C. R. Woodring's *Victorian Samplers: William and Mary Howitt* (Lawrence, Kansas, 1952).

be prophesied *about* is delightful—it makes one feel so grand —but to be prophesied *to* comes always too much into the form of lecture or commission—or direction—or something tiresome or frightening—which is worse: I've got into a course of investigation of Currant blossom, which seems to me about as vast a subject as I am fit for yet, and I like meandering about among the bushes in the afternoons—and I don't care about the next world if there are no currants—stay—now I shall be hurting you again if I don't mind—Well—but I do want to have some more evenings—and to bring Simon[28] with me if I may—so candid & good and wise and true he is; and I want to see what the spirits can make of him.—I was bored by their tiresome play about whistling the other night, when I wanted to talk to Paul Veronese. They said they would fetch him the next night you know.—I don't expect anything very happy from my father—I tell you that, in case anything should come—that you may not think it takes me with evil surprise, if good comes, so much the better. Is there time to arrange one for Saturday? I am going out of town for a week on Monday, and I know Saturday would suit M^r^ Simon, better than any other day I mean, in general.

Ever gratefully Yours,

J Ruskin.

[28] John Simon (1816-1904), one of Ruskin's several physicians. Ruskin first met Simon in 1856 and their friendship developed quickly. Simon, who held a number of important medical posts, including the presidency of the Royal College of Surgeons, was knighted in 1887. He attended Ruskin during the mental collapse of 1878 and played a prominent part in the medical side of Ruskin's tangled emotional life.

Monday Evening
[Mid-April, 1864][29]

Dear Mrs Cowper

I got home on Saturday evening, only in time to be sorry I had not come back on Friday—But I would have made an effort to come; only I thought that two cold people like John Simon & me might check the power too much.—I ought to have answered your nice note before now—but I can't get in from the garden when I go out—in time to do anything—please don't ask me to come to dinner. I feel stupid & odd and ugly and wretched—among strangers. It's too late to mend my ways—especially in summer when I like the long quiet evenings—But it is too late anyhow.

I have plenty to do at home—and must stay and do it. I don't want to talk—I want to rest, and *do* things.

Why *must* we all do things when we are "so tired." I declare I won't, for one.

Ever gratefully Yours,
J Ruskin

[29] The close connection between this letter and Letter 11—in their references to Simon and spiritualism—suggests strongly the date ascribed.

Letter 13

Wednesday Ev^g
[April 20, 1864][30]

Dear M^rs Cowper

I am bound, for the Yorkshire hills, to morrow: but will really come whenever you think I can be useful in that business. I was not "worritted" by the blame, last night. But I was by the advice.—What I am— these beings probably know better than I:—but what I should do or believe—? All they say is so precisely what the weak—illiterate Evangelicals say, in this world, and the impression on my mind is beginning to be that they know no more—out of the body—than in it, except that there *is* a spiritual state. It seems to me they retain their earthly ignorances—wickednesses—weaknesses—at least in great measure. How can they ask me to believe—yet —more than I do?—Were I to speak out about this—I could do no good till I know more. But they were right in accusing me of fear—I shall be hard put to it to say—if I have to say— "the old faith is right after all," but assuredly I'll say so—if I find it so—Hitherto—the facts are inconsistent with it—the sayings only consistent. But how marvellous—that fact of the immediate presence of the spirits—from any distance—You know that was very pretty of that spirit I asked for, to give only her pets name—Ellie—I was wrong to ask for the other —that was what she meant by her silence.

But you know there was much to make me sorrowful— besides the scolding I got—only I expected that—and my life

[30] The opening sentence of the letter yields the date suggested, for the reference to the "Yorkshire hills" is associated with the commencement of the lecture entitled "Traffic" which Ruskin gave on April 21, 1864, in the Town Hall, Bradford. "Traffic" begins: "My good Yorkshire friends, you asked me down here among your hills. . . . " Also, April 21, 1864, was a Thursday, and as Ruskin talks of going down "tomorrow" and dates the letter "Wednesday Ev[enin]g," it seems the date given is highly likely.

has been so mistaken—and his,[31] also—that which of us has been wrongest—I don't believe he can know there, any more than I here. But he ought to speak to me alone—surely—I could not talk to him that way.—How happy you are with your dear ones—you can talk everywhere to *them.*

Ever gratefully Yours

J Ruskin

[Part of first sheet of letter is cut away and across from the cutout Ruskin writes "I cut out a blot—opposite, but can't make it pretty or architectural in Section."]

[31] John James Ruskin's.

Letter 14

[Late April, 1864][32]

Dear Mr Cowper

I am laid by with cold—and cannot count on any liberty at any fixed date—I was unwilling to write yesterday—it is so tempting—that Panshanger[33] ideal, and I want to see you and Mrs Cowper so much—But my looks into that higher world of yours, especially on its womanly side—always leave me sorrowful and discontented with my life—or my semi- or demi-life—which is very foolish, but which is nevertheless always so. It is better for me to keep at my work, and indeed I have enough on my hands just now.

Here is vanity for you, too! I should like to *read* that lecture to Mrs Cowper. It will take a full hour and a quarter. And allowing for interruption—(such as disreputable essays need) —and for a little flattery—which I can't get on without—it might take an hour and a half. They miss all my best bits out of those Newspaper reports—do you public men live a life of perpetual mental imputation of this sort? and does every paper miss exactly the bits its party doesn't like—and which you spoke just because they did'nt?—and which you therefore chiefly *do*?

I'm going to publish the lecture but it will be with notes & take some time—and it's better read, being meant for that. I am so glad you like it, but how in the world do you find time to see things?

Ever faithfully Yours
J Ruskin

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32 The date is based on the textual reference to "that lecture" which suggests Ruskin is writing about "Traffic" (see preceding letter).

33 Panshanger, the country seat of William Cowper's family, is about two and a half miles west of Hertford. There is an interesting and reasonably full account of the house—not an especially attractive edifice —in *The Victoria History of the County of Hertford*, ed. William Page (4 vols.; Westminster, 1902), III, 468-72. Gilbert White speaks admiringly of the "Panshanger oak" in *The Natural History of Selborne*. The estate is perhaps more renowned for its parks and timber than for its architecture.

Letter 15

Denmark Hill, S.

[Mid-July, 1864][34]

Dear M^rs^ Cowper

Are you quite sure you are in town?—I have an uneasy feeling that this can be only a spiritual manifestation from Curzon Street. But I'll come at seven on Thursday to see.

Ever faithfully Yours

J Ruskin

[34] The date is deduced from the textual references to spiritualism and to Thursday; both suggest a meeting at Mrs. Cowper's on Thursday, July 19, 1864 (*Diaries,* II, 594) at which D. D. Home, the spiritualist, was present.

Letter 16

[Autumn, 1864][35]

Dear M^rs^ Cowper—

Now how *could* I tell you if I were alive? when I did'nt know if you were anywhere, or somewhere else—You might have been in Rome[36] again, for what I knew—I've a dim notion that you are always there.—I can't tell you anything to day. And tomorrow I've nothing to tell except that I am working hard at Egyptian mythology & such like. But I will write again tomorrow.—I can only send this word today. All kind memory to M^r^ Cowper.

Ever faithfully Yours,
J Ruskin

[35] The date derives from the textual reference to Egyptian antiquities, upon which Ruskin worked hard, in the British Museum, in the closing months of 1864 (*Works*, XVIII, xxxiii-xxxv). Allusions to Egyptian lore are not infrequent in *The Ethics of the Dust*, which appeared in the following year.

[36] Where Ruskin first became aware of Mrs. Cowper in 1840, though he did not meet her until 1854 (*Works*, XXXV, 503).

Letter 17

26th September [1864][37]

Dear Mrs Cowper

I have been trying to find some way of getting down this week—it is so tempting—your promise of quiet—and I should indeed like so much to come—were it possible—But an infinite number of cobweb threads fasten me here—inexplicably —but not to be broken. The strongest being a dim thread indeed—leading I know not where through labyrinths of old times. I've just got into some depth of sand about the Egyptian things—and if I leave my work ever so little the sand will all blow in upon me again—My head is full of misshapen Gods, & worse misshapen interpretations of them—but it is all so interesting—and will bear at last on what interests you— But at present it is too much for my poor little brains, and I can't talk about it, or anything. Then I've workmen in the house—in short—I can't come, or at least it seems to me so which is all the same. Miss B is an inoffensive, quiet kind of girl enough, if you like to ask her by herself—but I'm not sure that she could come—she's so busy photographing.

I told you—did I not? that we had an evening with Home[38]

[37] The textual reference to "Egyptian things" places this letter close in time to the one immediately preceding—hence the year suggested.

[38] Daniel Dunglas Home (1833-86), born near Edinburgh and taken to the United States as a child. Home achieved fame as a spiritualist in America, England, and on the Continent. He attracted many distinguished followers in legal, academic, and literary circles. Browning had Home in mind when he wrote "Mr. Sludge the Medium." Home published autobiographical writings, founded (with S. C. Hall and a Dr. Elliotson) the *Spiritual Athenaeum*, and was the subject of two books from his wife's pen. He was also involved in a seamy chancery suit over the sum of £60,000 he was said to have acquired from a lady by "spiritual" influence. It is likely that the evening Ruskin mentions occurred in June, 1864. For further information about Ruskin's connections with this man see *D. D. Home: His Life and Mission* (London, 1888), pp. 212 ff.

at the Halls![39] and that absolutely nothing happened all night. —But I'll go well into it some day, only I must learn hieroglyphics first, & a few things more.

—Ever with sincere regards to M[r] Cowper gratefully Yours

J Ruskin

[39] Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Carter Hall. Both were much concerned with spiritualism. The husband was an editor, author, art critic, and, it would seem, enthusiast about things in general. He achieved modest literary fame, mainly as an editor. He edited *The Art Journal* from 1839—when it was known as *The Art Union*—until his death fifty years later. Ruskin speaks disparagingly of his editorial abilities in Letter 38; for further criticism of Hall by Ruskin see my edition of *Ruskin's Letters from Venice, 1851-1852* (New Haven, 1955), pp. 174-75.

Letter 18

Monday [December 19, 1864][40]

My Dear Mrs Cowper

That bit about the Aracoeli[41] is of course irresistible—in spite of shame—and indolence—and much to do—here—and voice like a crow's—(only weak,) I must come,—but I *can* only come from Thursday to Saturday.—I will get down in good time on Thursday afternoon,—if it really will be quiet—and not full of terrible icy people from everywhere? But don't write again—Yes—do—for I'm not sure that these days will really do—and please tell me if any—I have faith enough in Lady Cowper[42] to scratch out this—strangers *are* to be there —their names—for I think I never entered a country house yet without calling some other visitor some absurd name, and covering myself with confusion & wishing myself under the fender—in the first quarter of an hour.

I remember that pleasant evening at Froude's[43] well—I'm sure I shall be sorry to go away again—it's the plunge that's so dreadful! but go away I must—for in this Christmas time

[40] The black-edged paper on which the original letter is written suggests the death of Ruskin senior in 1864, and the final lines of the letter communicate Ruskin's desire to take care of his mother during the first Christmas of her widowhood. Taken in conjunction with the following letter—where Ruskin expresses his intention to "stay till Saturday"—this Christmas-time date seems extremely likely, since Christmas in 1864 fell on a Sunday.

[41] This was to have been the name of the third part of *Our Fathers Have Told Us;* for further information about this undertaking see *Works,* XXXIII, 191 ff. The Church of Santa Maria in Ara Coeli in Rome had strong personal associations for Ruskin and Mrs. Cowper.

[42] The sister-in-law of William Cowper and wife of his older brother, the sixth Earl Cowper.

[43] James Anthony Froude (1818-94), the historian, and a close friend of Ruskin. It is of interest, in passing, to recall that Ruskin sympathized more with Froude than with Charles Eliot Norton when the latter two engaged in controversy over Froude's publications about Carlyle.

my Mother has no one to take care of her—and though she is very indignant at the idea of needing to be taken care of, I am not easy when I am away.

With sincere regards to Mr Cowper

Ever gratefully Yours,
J Ruskin

Letter 19

Wednesday [December 21, 1864][44]

Dear Mrs Cowper

I am sadly afraid you have not got my Monday's letter and that you will be taken by surprise by this tomorrow—telling you that I mean to follow it myself, and stay till Saturday if I may. I hope to come by mid-day train, but just let me make my way from the station quietly, for I cannot answer for coming by that train. I may be detained until the afternoon—so don't make any arrangements about me—I'm still not well —but you know—what *could* one do, but come—so bid?

Ever gratefully Yours

J Ruskin

[44] For corroboration of this date see Letter 18, n. 40.

Letter 20

Denmark Hill, s.
[Before September, 1869][45]

I have mounted for you another little drawing—which has its meaning also—namely the uselessness even of simplicity and virtue without *order*—it will make a pretty little companion to the first—and I always intended to include it with the first, for the somewhat large price I named, if the first was bought; but I would not send it to the bazaar because it was done for me hurriedly by Mr Inchbold,[46] and is unfinished and partly spoiled—it happens very prettily (does it not?) that I am able thus with so much pleasure to myself to fulfil my sense of justice to the Purchaser! This cottage is in Savoy—at St Martin's[47]—just under the aiguille de Varens—and some day—I will touch the spoiled background for you and make it more intelligible—it is a little waterfall between grey cliffs. There is much habitual misery in these cottages: their people living—with least possible labour—in the midst of luxuriant abundance.

I cannot write more, but hope for some happy talks when you return. I write to Mr Cowper today also—being ever gratefully yours and his,

J Ruskin

I will send the cottage to day to Broadlands. I am very glad to hear of the occasion of your being there. Will you offer my respectful regards to lady Palmerston?

---

[45] This stray fragment can only be dated—most unsatisfactorily—before the death of Lady Palmerston in September, 1869.

[46] J. W. Inchbold (1830-88), a painter whose work—especially "The Moorland," based on a passage from "Locksley Hall"—Ruskin greatly admired. Ruskin's kindness to Inchbold, as well as some drawings the artist executed for him, is referred to in E. T. Cook's *Life of Ruskin* (2 vols.; London, 1911), I, 401-2.

[47] A place much enjoyed by Ruskin and often mentioned in his work. The Hotel de Mont Blanc in St. Martin gives its name to a chapter in *Praeterita*.

Letter 21

Denmark Hill, s.

[December, 1865][48]

Dear M^rs^ Cowper,

I'm so glad you want to see me. I'll come whenever you like to tell me, now. I want to see you, and to ask you to be acquainted with two very dear friends of mine who are *so* nice —both: M^rs^ La Touche and her daught.—I don't know how to manage these things, but I must and will manage it—There.

Ever affectionately Yours,

J Ruskin.

Please write at least to say if M^r^ Cowper is better. Sincere regards to him.

[48] This conjectural date is based on the textual reference to the presence of the La Touche family in London at this time; from *Diaries,* II, 585, we know that it was late this year that Ruskin had seen Rose for the first time in three years. Also, by the time the La Touches returned to Ireland—in the spring of 1866—they had come to know Mrs. Cowper well.

Letter 22

Denmark Hill, s.
8th January [1866][49]

My dear Mrs Cowper

Mrs La Touche wrote to you, I find yesterday, in consequence of a mistake partly hers, partly mine—she having understood that you were to call upon her, yesterday.

I am sure you will kindly do so when you return to town. I hope this letter may be in time to prevent your surprise at hers.

Faithfully Yours,
J Ruskin

[49] The similarity of subject in this letter and Letter 21 suggests the year ascribed.

Letter 23

Denmark Hill, s.
15th February [1866][50]

Dear Mrs Cowper

If you are well enough to allow us, *everybody* will come on Thursday next: I think you will like Mr La Touche and it is better so—and I think he is pleased that we settled it so—And if you're very very good—you might ask me, the other way, besides, another day, you know, mightn't you? Please write and say if you're better. I don't mean only if we may come. I mean I really do want to know that you're better.

Ever gratefully Yours,
J Ruskin

[50] This letter is plainly consonant with the letter immediately preceding—hence the year ascribed.

Letter 24

Denmark Hill, S.

[February, 1866][51]

Dear Mrs Cowper

You see, with the Six-foil arrangement, the "going down" is all very well—but when one *is* down—it does'nt do; there's a nasty cross diagonal. I should like mightily to have Dolly and Henry;[52] but then—you see,—you would have to give Rosie to Henry: Don't have Rossetti, please; If you could have two other nice people (—Mr & Mrs Froude?)—it would do; or if you could get Dolly and any body nice for her, bigger than me; without Henry.—Or Henry alone, and somebody bigger than Rosie for him:—you see, though Mr L.[53] is very good—yet, (not by his fault) his coming will take away the sense of "cosiness," because—more because he thinks so himself—than for any other reason—but so it is—and so, you can for *me*: and ten will be better than six that way, and you can have anybody that's nice. Do you know Professor Owen.[54] He's nice, and he lets Rosie teaze him out of his life, when she goes to the Brit. Mus. I think perhaps I could manage to bring him, but you must surely know him? I like Capt Drayton too—but we must'nt have more evangelicalism please. I'll come in tomorrow afternoon, in hope of seeing you, for a

[51] The year and month are based on the indications from Letter 23 that Ruskin is arranging a gathering—including the La Touches and himself—at Mrs. Cowper's.

[52] Most probably Henry Frederick Cowper, one of William Cowper's nephews. Dolly was the nickname for Lady Florence Cowper, sister of Henry Cowper. In 1871 she married Auberon Edward William Molyneux Herbert.

[53] La Touche.

[54] Sir Richard Owen (1804-92), one of the most eminent anatomists of his day. In 1856 Owen was placed in charge of the natural history divisions of the British Museum. Because of his numerous writings and diversified interests Owen made many friends among Victorian intellectuals.

minute—and *you* can *give* me *orders then*—and *meantime*—if you can make sure of lady Florence & Henry, do, and you can think afterwards how to manage for me.

Always gratefully Yours,

J Ruskin.

You don't say a word about yourself. You *might* have believed me. Thanks for the thought of my mother. But alas—she will never—but for a drive—or a little propped walk in the garden go out of her house more. She is lame, & nearly blind, and very old—84.

Letter 25

Denmark Hill, S.
19th February 1866.

Dear Mrs Cowper

For the sake of the Aracoeli, bear with me just a little more; it is such a relief to talk to you about things: and I did not tell you all I wanted, this morning. You might think it wrong in me to avail myself at all of the reluctant permission of the father & mother to continue in any shadow of our old ways.—But there is a quiet trust between Rosie and me which cannot be broken, except by her bidding. I know very certainly that she will not engage herself in any way without telling me about it first;—and also, that in my respect for her, (while her mother *will* always treat her as a mere child) and in my understanding of all her thoughts, and sympathy with them (which her father cannot always give)—my regard is precious to her; and she likes to be able to say anything she has in her mind to me—and would not be at all pleased if she were at present obliged to break off intercourse. And I am simply her servant. When she bids me leave her—I shall do so without a word of farther petition. But only *she* can bid me. I must not do it of my own purpose or thought. As far as a child who has never felt love, can imagine what it is, she knows so much of it as that I care only for her happiness—and that she has only to do what is right and best, and due to herself—that nothing else than that could ever help or comfort me.

—Now, observe—in any word you speak to the mother—you must remember that she knows perfectly how *I* feel: but there is no confidence between Rosie and her; and she knows nothing of the child's depth of feeling—and I think could not be brought to understand or at least to believe it—rightly. Rosie's just like Cordelia—so you had better not in any way

speak otherwise of Rosie to her,—it would only make things a little more difficult for me, if she thought more of her daughter—and they cannot at least at present—be brought into any quite true or happy relations. Now with the Father, it is nearly the reverse. Rosie is infinitely precious to him, and there is great and true sympathy between them;—except about me;—for he cannot understand me at all, nor has he any idea of my caring for her otherwise than as a goodnatured and—to him—inconvenient friend.—But he knows that neither Rosie nor I would ever do anything in the least betraying his trust in us: and in now checking our intercourse, I think he is really acting more in fear for me than for her—and dreads, for my sake, that my feelings may become now—what they have been for these seven years.

So now, I think, you know all about it,—and you see you may do what you can for me, freeheartedly—without fear of harm—and for Aracoeli sake. For I cannot be worse—and every day and hour that I gain is just so much pure gain—before the days of darkness.

Ever affectionately Yours,

J Ruskin

—I have been very wicked in forgetting other people, just now. When I saw you before you went to Broadlands, I was so disappointed at your having to go away for a "week," that I forgot to fulfil a promise I had given to ask you to look over the memorial enclosed and to ask M^r^ Cowper if it is in right—or endurable form. And if you will do what may be done for us when we send it in. Read all the letter—it is from M^rs^ Edward Jones[55] and it will show you partly how nice she is.

[55] Georgiana Burne-Jones, wife of the painter.

PART II

Letters 26 to 61

[February 1866]—June 25, 1867

THE LETTERS in this part are despairing letters which take an increasingly frenzied tone as Ruskin vainly pursues his ideal; they are complemented by constant references in his diaries to ghastly dreams. After Rose's refusal of his hand—on February 2, 1866—clashes occur between her parents and her suitor. But, as Letter 26 suggests, Ruskin did not forsake his hopes and, under the vigilant eye of John La Touche, actually visited Rose. Yet restraint rigidly circumscribed their relationship, a restraint that by June caused Ruskin to write Rawdon Brown:

> But they won't let her write to me any more now, and I suppose the end will be as it should be—that she will be a good girl and do as she is bid, and that I shall settle down to—fifteenth-century documents, as you've always told me I should.[1]

Inextricably connected with parental opposition is Rose's religious fanaticism, fearfully mentioned by Ruskin in Letter 35 as he writes of her "exaltation" during her recent illness.

After an altercation with Mrs. Cowper which nearly ruined their friendship for good, Ruskin persuades her, with her husband, to intercede for him by visiting Harristown, which

[1] *Works*, XXXVI, 509.

she does in September. This—after some bitter summer letters Ruskin wrote his confidante, letters ringing with hostility toward Mr. and Mrs. La Touche—brings a brief sign of hope for the harried man. But, by Letter 48, there is a retreat from this more optimistic position, followed by reiterations of the cruelty of the La Touches. Shortly thereafter, in the new year, 1867, Rose writes him "beautiful" and "lovely" letters, but by February the antipathy toward the parents breaks out anew; this persists, to the accompaniment of acrimonious letters from Mr. or Mrs. La Touche, throughout the spring of the year. His hostility toward the parents Ruskin echoes in his spring and summer letters to Mrs. Cowper up until mid-1867 when, with Ruskin's departure for a holiday in Scotland, the correspondence terminates abruptly, not to be renewed until the following February.

But, during the months when he does not, apparently, write Mrs. Cowper, Ruskin's mind does not stray from thoughts of Rose. In his diaries are frequent references to her, including a poignant entry of August 3, 1867, when he records that half his time of waiting—until he can propose again—is over "to-night, at twelve."[2] Also, he mentions rowing a little girl like Rose on the lake and writes his mother from Keswick on July 24, 1867: "Since Rosie sent me that last rose after refusing her other lover,[3] I have felt so sure of her that everything else begins to be at peace with me."[4] Unfortunately, his tranquillity will not endure long. With the coming of 1868 the emotional storm breaks out anew.

[2] *Diaries*, II, 627.

[3] Still, to biographers, an obscure figure.

[4] *Works*, XXXVI, 531.

Letter 26

Denmark Hill, s.

[February, 1866][5]

Dear Mrs Cowper

They say there are some good honest astrologers among us still—if they were not forced to remain unconfessed [?]. I wish I could find one—I want to know what is the matter with my stars. I am glad always to know that about her father—I have mistaken him all these years. He walked about the room, one day, when his wife had a headache and asked him not—and I interpreted everything afterwards by that fragment of Rosetta stone,—and I'm no Champollion[6] at such work. Then he did terrible things to me without saying why,—and I interpreted them all into mere selfishness. Yet I have known before now—intensely feeling hearts which nevertheless felt only for their own pains,—if one saw well into them.—God knows that at this instant, if Rosie were to tell me she loved any one, and could not see him without my help—I would do all for her—bear—if it were necessary—to see them together all day—be their footman and walk behind them—nay—be their servant after they were married—if they needed it—I don't think her father loves her so well as that. But I never once thought of the difficulty taking *that* form—I always thought it was mere and pure objection to *me*—on various—not unreasonable grounds. Why—how possibly could he *less* lose her than by giving her to me? He might live with us—or have us to live with him—*always*—he never need be a day

[5] The tone of this letter suggests the emotional crisis of February, 1866. Also, the reference in the text to the "three years since I last saw her" echoes the entry in *Diaries*, II, 585, where Ruskin notes, on December 10, 1865, that "I saw her first after three years."

[6] Jean François Champollion (1790-1832), whose reputation as an Egyptologist earned him the chair of Egyptian antiquities at the Collège de France.

away from her. She would not love him less—but more—(though that would not easily be possible,) than she does now.

For me, it is not a question of pain and of healing. It is a question of two kinds of life—spiritual or material: The love of her is a religion to me—it wastes and parches me like the old enthusiasm of the wild anchorites. I do not know how long I could bear it without dying—in that waiting—I am not sure even—how far in its conceivable happiness, it might be endurable by me—it might kill me soon—if the least pang of doubt or regret for her, mingled with it; But I can part with it, and take up material life, of a kind, among stones, and plants, and the like—and not die—nay—not be unhappy I told her this; and it is true.—I was really quite happy examining the angles of calcite, before she came this time—and I can be again,—but it is no question of time or healing—it is of being a lower or higher creature, for ever—or for such ever as God has made us for.

Ever gratefully Yours,
J Ruskin.

I have been reading your letter again—it is better than I thought—you speak as if the parents might at some far day consent without utter sorrow—now the mother always told me—*never*—*never*—Meantime, don't be vexed for me. I will be *quite quiet* now, and courageous—for some time, at any rate. You don't know what hard sorrow I've had breaking me down in the three years since I last saw her—I was very close to death in the first year, for the separation took me by surprise.

Letter 27

Denmark Hill, s.

[March, 1866][7]

Dear M^rs^ Cowper

So many thanks for your little note. But you had given me no pain—but relief. And you could'nt *but* have thought it was all play, unless you had asked me. And what you say is right—all love is good—even when it kills—for it kills into a pure marble—not into wormy dust: And things are not so bad for me, neither. If one is utterly despised or disliked—it is frightful—I don't know quite what it would be, then. But as long as the child trusts me so as to come to me for whatever she wants —and bid me do whatever she chooses, it is really all that one has any business to need.

Lady Cowper wrote me such a pretty letter the other day, and she has been so kind to me that I told her a little about it—(for I wanted her to see Rosie)—but not what I've told you—For it *is* too absurd to be told to anybody but—somebody that one has been absurd about before.

Ever affectionately Yours

J Ruskin.

[7] This conjectural date is derived only from the similarity in tone between this letter and several others written about this time.

Letter 28

Denmark Hill, s.
12th March. [1866][8]

Dear Mrs Cowper,

I am very very sorry you have been so ill:—now *please* don't laugh and say "of course you are": I think however that when you are quite able again, you might perhaps do a little more for me. The black fates have surely had their will enough by this time. For you know it *was* fate—the child was really ill, and tried hard to keep up for me; and even her mother, cruel as she is, would'nt have played me a trick like that;—wantonly:—It was worse still at that horrible Elijah—for that was Rosie's own plan, and she had wanted to hear it, & make me attend to it—ever so long; and I had got leave to have her beside me;—and she had violent cold & cough, & could'nt come, and tried to keep it off to the last moment and had to send me word when I was just waiting for her—& I could'nt get away till the first act—part—whatever it is—was over. And if ever I have a chance of writing a critique on the Elijah!—won't I, kindly!

Then as if that was not enough, her mother gets an invitation for her into Northumberland—and she just gets well in time to go,—but she'll be back on Friday—(injury [?] apart) —and then there are still ten days. You might say that you wanted to see them once more,—comfortably—might'nt you? I'm going to lunch with papa tomorrow—and shall be able to guess a little then whether it would be again possible. The mother is really the worst of the two now, I think. My cousin[9] had a long letter from Rosie tonight—and she's getting bright walks on the Cheviots—which is one comfort.

[8] The performance of the *Elijah*, mentioned in the text and given at Exeter Hall on March 2, 1866, establishes the year of this letter.

[9] Joan Agnew.

I have been quite forgetting, in my selfishness, to ask you about some papers I sent you, touching an old lady's pension. I find you had been troubled about it before, and again I am sorry. Do you think—if I come to call at two on Wednesday—(Or before two) that you could see me for a moment—and I would tell you how the lunch passes tomorrow.

I am grieved for M^r^ Cowpers illness also—and ever gratefully Yours.

J Ruskin.

Letter 29

Denmark Hill, s.

16th March, 1866.

Dear Mrs Cowper

I fear you thought it an insolently proud saying of mine yesterday—"I want no companion in my work—& can have none,"—but it meant simply that in my *small* specialty, I know that no one can help me—nor is it intellectual sympathy that I need. I have enough of it from men. I do not care for it from women:—nor is it even love that I need. I have had much given me: But I want *leave* to love: and the sense that the creature whom I love is made happy by being loved: That is literally all I want. But it seems to me indeed—all—that without that all else is nothing. I don't care that Rosie should love *me:* I cannot conceive such a thing for an instant—I only want her to be happy in being loved:—if she could tread upon me all day—& be happy—because it was me she trod on:—it would be all I want. I wonder if you thought me cold & lifeless about it yesterday—I could have said such wild things—if I had let go.

I am so grateful to you.

—You know, surely, that it *must* be comforting to me that you should be so kind—do not you?

Ever faithfully Yours,
J Ruskin

Do you know they have changed their house to 4 Upper Grosvenor St? They've come back—and there's a letter from Rosie today asking my cousin to lunch with her, and me to come to tea. I hope some room yet exists therefore for your intercession.

Letter 30

Denmark Hill, s.

20th March, 1866.

My *dear* Mrs Cowper,

You have certainly done me ever so much good already—somehow—the sky's as blue again as it was—They actually let her come with my cousin and me shopping—(at least to one shop—) without mama, yesterday,—and we got a little talk—and she says she's going to ask you to let *her* come and take tea with you by herself[10]—"and will you think it very very presuming of her"—and I said you would'nt. And theyre coming to dine with me—and I'm to have another chance for the Elijah.[11] It must be all your doing—you angel—only angels must'nt be ill,—please don't be.

Ever your devoted—And before I could sign—here is your kind note—just come. Look here—I am sure Rosie wants to have a little talk with you by herself; I think she offers to come to tea because you said something about not being able to see more than one person each day while you were so ill. But I feel sure too that she wants to ask your advice about several things—at least she would rather be by herself—not that I've told her a word about your being (our!) my Madonna and Stella Maris;—but she likes you so much—and I daresay thinks she could talk to you better than to anybody else.

The insolence of my writing that![12] indeed I did'nt mean it:—Still I know she is a little happy in being kind to me—and I don't want to come to tea with them—because—now that she *is* kind to me—I'm so grateful that I can't behave

[10] Ruskin originally wrote "yourselves"; "herself" is a superscription, inserted in his hand.

[11] Presumably a reference to the performance of this oratorio given in Exeter Hall on March 27, 1866, by the National Choral Society.

[12] Ruskin has drawn a line that leads from the beginning of this exclamation to the parenthetical "(our!)" of the preceding sentence.

properly at all before people,—and she feels it, and gets nervous—and then headachy—I'm only comfortable when I can be near her without having to talk—either to her or anyone else; and just look at her dress, and think it is hers: So please give her a little talk—you & she—You will find out what she is, that way, too—she would'nt say a word before her mother, at present. Her mother puzzles me terribly. She *was* ever so nice, once.

I will be as patient as if the Hesperides apples grew on aloes. I have lived in patience wholly without hope till now—it would be strange if I could not be patient—now. Only the spring & summer & winter, and the Stars—are *not* patient.

I shall leave this note today. I may just have a chance of seeing you.

Ever your grateful J Ruskin

Letter 31

Denmark Hill, s.

20th March [1866][13]

Dear Mrs Cowper

I am in all unselfishness, grieved deeply to hear of your intention of going to Broadlands. I am sure it is dangerous for you to travel in this season, when you have been so ill. I have seen so much harm come of these efforts that I feel it my duty—however presuming or impertinent it may seem—at least to say what I feel. At least half of the sorrow I have seen in my life, from illness, has been brought about by conscientious efforts, made at a time when absolute and remorseless repose was needed, and when nothing more was needed—but—that denied all harm has followed.

Little right have I to say this—I who have disturbed and troubled you so much—day after day! I have some comfort in thinking that you will like Rosie by herself—she, at least will be good for you. I don't know if she will come today. I hope so,—she is promised to me a little while—but I'll part with her if she wants to go to you.

I *am* free on Friday, and if—

It is just conceivable that you might like to have her & her mother & me to tea—& that it might'nt fatigue you—and—if it were so, and could be? Well—I cannot be more grateful than I am now—nor more devotedly yours.

J Ruskin.

Please—there's one word in your kind letter—sent down yesterday—which I can't make out—and its just the most important of all—forgive me therefore for asking you—you say Rosie writes such an affectionate little note—and it cant be for merits of yours known to her—so it must be for. . . . . 's *sake*?

[13] The opening sentence of this letter and of the one immediately following, which Ruskin himself dates as 1866, show that this one belongs to that same year.

Letter 32

22nd March
1866.

Denmark Hill, s.

Dear Mrs Cowper

One word more—(you know I cannot plague you at Broadlands)—perhaps you have been a little surprised at my not speaking more of the deeper reasons for my love of her:—but you know I count on your doing me the justice of thinking that so much va sans dire when I say "I love her"—the strong, stainless,—grave heart—the noble conscience—the high courage—the true sympathy with me in all I hope or try to do of good;—the quick rebuke of me in all hopelessness—or ceasing to do—or to strive—her utter freedom from all affectation—her adamant purity of maiden-heartedness—and all this with a childs playfulness—and a noble woman's trust in my constancy and singleness of love for her—is not this enough to make me love?

She was terribly hard to me yesterday however—only gave me one little syllable of comfort—I suppose it was because her father was watching—but she should not do that, tell her—for it can only make him think worse of me—as if I were now wholly on false terms with him. And she does not know that I wrote to him asking leave to speak about her—(meaning only to ask what were his real and final wishes as to my conduct to her)—and that he only answered "my dear friend"—and went on to other matters,—and as I had told him—if he did not let me speak to him—not to blame *me* for any reserve between us, Rosie may surely, when he *does* let us see each other—not snap at me in a fright; nor refuse my arm when I've ordinary etiquette right to give it. She knows best however—only yesterday she made me think something had gone *newly* wrong. But it is inexplicably foolish of the parents to put any restraint on either her or me—we are not of the

ignoble kind who can be dealt with in that way. If they gave us both absolute trust and let me speak to her fully & freely—telling both of us what they wished or resolved,—she and I would either end the thing at once, if we made up our minds that it was right, or we would accept what terms they chose to impose without heartburning: or we would give them fair battle, on open ground—far more really favourable to them than the ground we are on now. They treat us so as to give *her* the greatest possible weariness—and me the maximum of pain—contriveable by human art—and if they go on so, will lose all the fair advantage they might have had, and probably keep Rosie from all frank acceptance and trial of other probabilities of settling in life—for at least some time to come, when *I* would have made her do just as you think she should do, openheartedly—and with perfect sense that she was doing me the truest duty also, by such trial of her own heart. Though it is a little harder upon me than even you seem quite to feel. To wait is nothing—If I could be nobler, for her, every day I waited—I would promise not to see her face for a hundred years—and "think them as a day, for the love I bear her"—But what three years,—when I am seventy or eighty—if I live—can repay me the loss of *these*? If she *can* cast me into the dark at once, without too great pain to herself—I think she should. I solemnly think that—only *I* can't say so to her. Try, you,—with such *tenderness* as you know to use. That is the main mission you have today.

Ever your grateful & devoted

J Ruskin.

and[14] caution, also—remembering that she has been very ill, and cannot *think*, just now—without harm. This has paralyzed me in many ways, and kept me from acting—or speaking—as I should otherwise. She is still on her sick bed, and I can only do just as she bids—I will always do that, indeed—only I can't so much as reason with her about it, now.

[14] Ruskin has drawn a connecting line from the beginning of this postscript to the word "tenderness" in the next to last sentence in the body of the letter. Thus one should read the postscript as a gloss on "tenderness."

Letter 33

Denmark Hill, s.

[Late March, 1866][15]

Dear Mrs Cowper,

Things are always sorrowful for me.—This has been a sad long "week" since you went down to Broadlands; and now you are ill. And I should have been sorry for that always, and now I think it is a part of my star's malignity cast on you.

—*I* have no power of managing anything about Roses *[sic]*. Whatever I ask—is therefore *not* done:—The mother is as bad as the father in that. I have written to her, as you bid me in your note: but I don't think it can be, I spoke wrongly to you of Mr La Touche: he is very good—only I've always been so far a trouble to him. You might ask them all three—in the formal way—and not tell them I was to be there. That would hardly do either:—the child would'nt be angry: but she would be uncomfortable, thinking her father & mother were:—Look here, I've written to Mrs La Touche telling her either, to be good for once, & bring Rosie, or else to write to you and ask you to send them formal invitations for all three. That's the best I can think of.

Always gratefully Yours,

J Ruskin.

[15] The connection between the opening paragraph of this letter and the commencement of Letter 32 suggests the date ascribed.

Letter 34

Interlachen 35th May, 1866.[16]

Dear Mrs Cowper

Edward Jones[17] wrote to me that you have been so *very* kind to Mrs Jones: and that she was so happy, and admired you so much, at breakfast, and I'm pleased with her for doing that, and very grateful to you.—I hear also you wrote a kind letter to Rosie for which still more thanks. I get a syllable or two—worth a good many words—sometimes, out of the letter she is still allowed to write to my cousin—and I am working at the spring flowers, and trying to be quiet, but I'm not well.—However, I am going to rest thoroughly, except a little flower drawing; the preface to the little book[18] I ordered my people to send you is the last word I shall write—for three years—at the end of that time I shall either be dead, or in better humour—or worse—and perhaps shall have something to say—one way or another: but whatever I do henceforward shall be as well as I can—I've written too carelessly and diffusely: but I like the note at p. 217, and a bit of my preface. I wish you could tell me you were better: a line to the Hotel des Alpes here would find me always, whether I was at Lauterbrunnen or Thun: but never mind if you are *not* better—you've had trouble enough with me.

Ever—with sincere regards to Mr Cowper

Faithfully and gratefully Yours

J Ruskin

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[16] This date is doubtless a slip of the pen for May 25 or 30, at which time Ruskin was at Interlachen.

[17] Burne-Jones (1833-98), the painter, whose associations with Ruskin are fully described in Lady Burne-Jones's *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones* (2 vols.; London, 1906).

[18] Perhaps some introductory remarks to a future edition of *The Crown of Wild Olive*, the first edition of that work having appeared on May 14, 1866.

Letter 35

Hotel of the Giesbach.
10th June. 1866

Dear Mrs Cowper

I have just received your letter and indeed I am grateful for it: and for your having been so good to Rosie and made her feel so much love for you;—only I cannot understand her letter—for I don't know of any clouds that have been upon *her,* in all her life—except illness—nor do I know why she speaks of "shadow" as if she saw it upon you also; nor do I know what it was that you asked for her, which she was so thankful for your asking, about the next world (—which is indeed to me so wholly "shadow") and of which she says, "if St C would only pray that prayer, too." But I must not trouble you about these fancies,—for after all—earnest and lovely as they are—they are but conditions of exaltation connected I think closely with her past illness: and which would probably pass away with recovered strength. Though it is all more and more a mystery—for how can one say what this feverish "exaltation" is, or how far it is a strength of soul possible only through weakness of body. If I thought it my duty to fancy anything, I *could* fancy it—and get into passionate states of reverence or affection—or anything else—for my imaginary God. But I do *not* think it my duty—it seems to me I am bound to act only on what I know to be fact—and that is little enough.—But I shall come out of this state—for good or evil—some day,—so it is of no use talking about it,—the only thing good for me at present seems to me to be, living as much like a grasshopper as I can, and attending only to my surrounding blades of grass. But it is difficult to live wholly without hope—and though I *have* hope—and that distinct, as I told you—yet I have much more fear—and a high hope—quenched in a deeper terror—is worse than the blank of life, at the time

of life when men are meant to be at peace, and to see good days.—And in other things, I have indeed no hope—for the past has been always error & disappointment and increasing sorrow: and how can I look for anything else in the future,—and what you showed me—at least—what I saw with you—of wonder—while it showed me the possibility of things being true which I had not believed—yet took away from me so much confidence in my modes of thought that I am now quite helpless—and don't care to think of anything—it is all so fathomless—and so distorted & ludicrous in its gloom.

The prospect of war is of course painful to me—but chiefly in the intense amazement and sense of solitude with which I see my fellowcreatures go mad in heaps—and drift into deepest guilt and misery as helplessly as dead leaves.

—Of immediate pleasantness, in surrounding things, I have enough.—This place (—south side of Lake Brientz), is quite a wilderness of Elysian fields in the springtime—and the Swiss people of the valley of Masli are the best I've yet seen—modest—dignified—kind:—and I've two bright girls with me, my cousin & Lady Trevelyan's[19] little niece—a wonderful child of 14, full of sweetest mischief, and noble promise:—only now that I'm left alone with them every breeze and sunbeam frightens me lest they should get ill—and I believe they're as much harm as good by making me anxious,—but they keep me from doing any work, and enjoy themselves, mightily, and make friends wherever they go, in the funniest way—generally getting spoiled by all the world. They've got hold of a pretty Oberlandaise of 17, here; very simple and sweet—and the only mountain girl I've ever spoken to who had any romance in her: but this one is as full of German fairy-worship and fancy as one could wish her; We had all a fine long ramble through the rocky glens yesterday; and met an old peasant—

[19] Paulina Trevelyan (b. 1816), wife of Sir Walter Trevelyan of Wallington, Cheshire, and one of Ruskin's closest friends. She died at Neuchâtel, a few weeks before this letter was written, while visiting the Continent with her husband, niece (Constance Hilliard), Ruskin, and Ruskin's cousin, Joan Agnew. Lady Trevelyan was a woman of modest literary, scientific, and artistic abilities. Carlyle spoke not unkindly of her, and she was a friend of Dr. John Brown, author of *Rab and His Friends*. She reviewed Ruskin's *Pre-Raphaelitism* and assisted him with some of the drawings for *The Stones of Venice*.

just at one of the turns of a rock path, with a white orchid in his hand. His instant presentation of it to my cousin, as a matter of course, the moment he looked at her, made us all laugh—afterwards.

I am going to let them see Lucerne & Schaffhausen and so bring them home very early in July: a line to poste restante Schaffhausen would be sure to reach me—but do not write unless you care to tell me something. I know how much you must have to do.

Ever gratefully Yours
With sincere regards to M[r] Cowper
J Ruskin

Letter 36

Denmark Hill, s.
[July–August, 1866][20]

Dear M^rs^ Cowper

You have given me a useful lesson as to the folly of hoping for sympathy, and the rudeness of asking for it—in matters such as I have lately teazed you about; yet I wonder, with all your pretty ways and sweet feelings in *little* things—(about my mothers netting for instance—) that you can give it me with this wholly unconscious severity—and write—"we are not going to H. town"—with more careless ease than *I* should feel in disappointing a child of a promised coming down to dessert—I wish we *were* all children—you make me acutely feel myself a very foolish *old* person. "You say you must be bright as you looked"—I was *not* bright that evening. You and M^r^ Cowper were both tired—I did my best not to be a heavier burden on you than I could help—and I was grateful to you for wearing my mother's shawl—and a little foolishly happy in thinking I should be grateful to you for—not the sort of lesson you have given me now.

—I have forwarded your letter to Miss Hill.[21]

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[20] During the summer of 1866—Ruskin had returned from the Continent on July 12—he tried to persuade Mrs. Cowper to intercede at Harristown, with Rose's family, on his behalf, as the conclusion to Letter 40, dated September 1, indicates. Thus this letter must have been written before September 1—hence the date suggested. The curt tone shows the strain Ruskin's request placed upon his friendship with Mr. and Mrs. Cowper.

[21] Octavia Hill (1838-1912), reformer and, for a number of years, an assistant to Ruskin in minor artistic matters. She interested him in improving housing for the poor and was tireless in her efforts for social amelioration. Her allegiance to Ruskin never faltered, although their friendship was subject to not infrequent stress. She was—to sound a topical note—one of the founders of the National Trust.

Letter 37

Denmark Hill, s.
Wednesday. [July–August, 1866][22]

Dear Mrs Cowper

You must now forgive *me* for having put you to this pain, and I will quite trust your kindness henceforward:—but consider a little how impossible it was for me to feel otherwise than I did. Your letters have always been very short—on this subject, sometimes in illness—sometimes in haste—unavoidable—as I am now assured—but having always the aspect to *me,* of getting quit of the matter with fewest possible words. Now—you are the *only* person—to whose judgment, feeling—and world-knowledge I can trust in this matter—who knows Rosie. I have one friend—Edward Jones—whose judgment I could trust (if he did not love me too much—)—but he is not a woman—and not in this world. You are the only creature who can guide me—and every one of your letters seemed an avoiding of the subject, which I thought was partly because you did not like the pain of otherwise and more directly discouraging me; and partly from not perceiving how much I felt.—Your answer after reading those letters of hers (looked for, you certainly do *not* know how anxiously)—was only an inevitable line—sent in the hurry of packing—and in the very gist of it—uncertain to me in its meaning.

"She certainly loves you—though it may have been *then* with a child's love." (Does this mean that you think it is likely now to be more than a child's—or only that it has been or may have been—never anything more?)—I thought you would write again—and tell me more of what you thought; and when you were going there—and say that it *was* cruel of them

[22] The tone of this letter, the reference to Octavia Hill, the remarks upon the visit to Harristown, and the mending of the little disagreement between Ruskin and Mrs. Cowper indicate, plainly, that it was written very shortly after Letter 36.

to separate me from her so sharply at once, after these years of love: And then your little note came—*looking*, mind you, as if it had been only written at all because you did not know Miss Hill's address,—and speaking of the not going to H.town as merely a slight disappointment to me! Surely you cannot wonder that I felt rebuked; I sat still a little while, with my eyes full of tears;—and then I tried to put myself in your place—and I said, "Suppose now—I were in the world, as she is—knowing many histories of people, (as she must—full of far deeper interest, as romances, than this poor foolish little story of mine)—and suppose that a woman, older than myself, and quite out of the world, and knowing little of me, but that I had recently been kind to her; and with no other plea than that she had loved me ages ago without my knowing it—should come to me, and tell me her foolish too-late love—and expect me to be interested in it and to help her in all ways that I could—What should I do? or think?" And then I answered to myself, "Surely, it is not quite so bad as that! —the difference of sex *does* make a difference in the fitness and grace—and even possibility, of such a thing—But even so—though I'm afraid—I should write her very short letters and put an end to the business, speedily, I should say precisely what I *did* feel—or not feel about it and give what advice or small pity I could, and decline acting, or hearing further—in so many plain English words—I would not answer in a hurry, nor with notes that wanted an address."

This was what I said to myself—and so I made up my mind that I ought to be angry with you, and so wrote as I did. And now do not think I tell you this in *continued* distrust. I tell it you only that you may understand what I felt. I quite trust you again as I did:—only you must give me your address and let me write one grave letter to you telling you why I want you so much to see her. For you *must* go to Harristown, please—at least—if you would, if I were on trial for my life, and you had possession of the only facts that were likely to save me—*if* you would go then—go now, if it is made any wise *possible* for you on their side, or by circumstances. For you *alone* can find out for me whether Rosie is acting only in childish love and pity, or whether there is indeed any feeling

on her side, deep enough for me to trust to, to secure her happiness with me; deep enough to justify me in persevering as I secretly persevere—against the absolute device of both her parents.—*You* only have tact—tenderness and enough of Rosie's confidence—to find out this for me. You may not be able—with all—but at least try for me. I *can* be patient—for any years of years—but—I want to be assured that I *ought* to be patient. Ever gratefully yours

JR.

Letter 38

Denmark Hill, s.

6th August 1866

Dear Mrs Cowper

My mother was deeply touched by your kindness in the matter of the poor little Penelope-work—(pictureless—as befits work done with no hope of any one's return—) That it found some favour with you was a great wonder and comfort to her—the feeling of being useless is one of her chief troubles. I was coming in to try to see you this afternoon, but the gusts of windy rain make me uncomfortable (or my coachman)—and I'm not sure whether you are in town. So I write to ask—and also to say what I perhaps should not in speaking say clearly, that I was sorry, as you were, that night —for Mr Home—and that in all the manifestations of this new power I have great sense of a wrongness and falseness somewhere—It seems, in the *best* people, to mean some slight degree of nervous disease: while in most of the instances I have heard of—or seen—it has not been manifested at all to the best people,—or the wisest. You, I believe know some mediums who are wise and good and—beautiful:—But All *my* experience (little enough)—huddles itself round the amazing fact that those two people the Marshalls whom we had always at Mrs Gregorys *are* mediums—and that you—are not. Again, I like Mr S. C. Hall; but he has assuredly all his life been doing mischief in his own editorial business,—he knows nothing about art, yet talks and works at it—in a wholly harmful and mistaken manner. And the spirits come to *him.* I am bold to say that *I* do know my business—and have worked at it, (in many ways erringly indeed)—but on the whole—rightly: and the spirits *don't* come to me! Much more could I compare many of my unspiritual friends to their advantage, it seems to me, with Mr Home. Again I like Capt. Drayton—

and have no objection whatever to the spirits, for liking him too—only—much more—it seems to me—than to an officer in quiet scientific life at Woolwich. They ought to come to men like Henry Lawrence[23] and Herbert Edwardes[24] in their all-important and troublous work in India. And they don't. And finally—to Turner[25]—or William Hunt[26]—or Edward Jones, I find the spirits have no advice to give on the subject of art—though all these men would be—or have been the better for it—but I met a Greek painter the other day—evidently a very fourth or fifth rate kind of person (though pleasant & amiable enough,) and the spirits are painting his picture for him by moving his elbow. I can but tell you my poor puzzlements—opinions I have none—I have not had one clear impression of the thing at any time, and content myself as best I can, with waiting to see what will come of it. I have a good deal of "waiting" to do—just now—too sorrowfully saying of every Evening and Morning, "It is another day." Will you give me the help of a happy hour—and tell me when I might hope to see you? With sincere regards to Mr Cowper Ever faithfully Yours,

J Ruskin

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[23] Henry Montgomery Lawrence (1806-57), an extraordinarily able civil servant and militarist who was created K.C.B. for his services to the Crown in India, where he died of wounds received in a native uprising.

[24] Herbert Benjamin Edwardes (1819-68), created K.C.B. shortly after his return to England in 1859. Edwardes was assistant to Henry Lawrence when the latter was British Minister in Lahore in the 1840's; Edwardes was also an important figure in the reform of Indian civil administration. He was the subject of Ruskin's *Bibliotheca Pastorum IV: A Knight's Faith* (*Works*, XXXI, 375-510), in which Ruskin collates passages from Sir Herbert's diary and from his *Year on the Punjab Frontier, 1848-1849* (London, 1851). *A Knight's Faith*, which grew out of a lecture Ruskin gave in 1883, did not actually appear until 1885.

[25] J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851).

[26] Ruskin refers here either to William Henry Hunt (1790-1864) or to William Holman Hunt (1827-1910). It is more likely the former to judge from the feeling for his work that Ruskin reveals in *Notes on Prout and Hunt* (*Works*, XIV, 365-448). Also, Ruskin did not become intimate with Holman Hunt until 1869, when they met by chance in Venice.

Letter 39

Denmark Hill, s.

9th August, 1866.

Dear Mrs Cowper

It will be a *great* grace to me if you will just glance at these letters, that you may see a little what the child has been to me for so long, and how cruel it is of them to take her from me now so utterly in an instant—how cruel, and vain, because what human thing—that *was* human—could be made to feel less, merely by silence—after years of love. Her marriage, if they can bring one about to their mind, will hurt me far more, if it comes after a year or two of silence, than it would if they let me be to her still what I have been—until then—and hear from herself—in her own time and way, whatever she had to warn me of, or to comfort me for, by telling me she was happy. You know they always say they do everything (that kills me) for my sake. They do me double harm by this—first because I feel it an insult to be judged *for*, by them—secondly because it makes me doubt their truth—because I must know they are thinking as much of their own plans as of my pain. If they were generous enough to admit that she *might* care a little for me, and that *that* was what they feared—it would seem to me so much nobler and more right of them than pretending to reason for me unreasonably—(which neither of them can do—I do believe that Mrs La Touche has true regard for me but she has cut me through and through with a sword of ice—again and again—in some of her later letters—) —and, if they do fear for her—they are still foolish enough to stop the letters—for she is not likely any more than I—to alter her mind in any way during a forced silence—but if they were to let us write frankly, as we used to do—I would play them wholly fair, and treat her simply (as she herself told me she wished to

be still treated)—as my child-friend, and faithfully keep from writing anything with double meaning or with any passionate or entreating tone in it; but wholly as I would if I did *not* love her otherwise than they would have me. And it would be far the best and straightest way—in all respects.

—I don't mean you to be martyred by reading all this packet—but I chose out a letter or two from each year—that you might see the kind of way we were in. (She was ill—all through—in 64 and I had only a short note or two)—These are not what I should have liked to send you best—but some of the long nicest ones are too difficult to read—and the dearest ones I can't let out of their drawer—and others had little incomprehensible pieces about her brother and all sorts of things—and these were the intelligestist [*sic*] I could choose when I came home last night—for I've to be in town again this morning and will leave them at Curzon S^{t}.

—One thing you will much wonder at—the evidence of the teazing I was always giving her. This was the mothers fault—She was always telling me Rose did not care the least for me—(see comments on Bonneville letters)—so that I—too ready at any rate to think no one like Rose *could* care for me—never trusted her kindest words—till too late.

The letter marked "me at home," always amused and delighted me much. The little monkey knew so thoroughly all the time she wrote it that I would ask for nothing better than to find "only me at home."

Well—please understand how grateful I am to you, & tell me where I may write to you yet. I enjoyed my evening yesterday so much, & my mother was so proud about the red thing. Ever affectionately Yours

J Ruskin

Letter 40

Denmark Hill, s.

Saturday. 1st Septr.
1866

Dear Mrs Cowper

I write instantly, with all thanks but I can't say the things I want to say, to day—you must give me another address. I have a mass of business letters to answer today.

Only this. Do not fear hurting me. The sooner the hurt comes that must, the less it will be—All that you can say of discouragement—thoughtfully and sternly—is good for me,—but shrinking from the subject, or from what you would feel to be a true friends best faith respecting it, hurts me as much, and is not good for me. Tell me simply when it is difficult for you to know what to say. Tell me firmly, when you feel that you ought to say what must give me pain.—I do not—surely you must know that I do not—think highly of myself in any wise, but this I will say fearlessly of myself, that I am wholly above the hypocrisy of asking for advice—when my mind is made up and when I only want to be encouraged *not* advised. And I am above the folly of laying to the account of my friend, the pain she is forced to give me. I think as darkly and sadly of all this as you can possibly do for me;—only I dare not cast away the last hope of happiness I have, in mere impatience of trial in the winning it.—For mind you, I am too strong hearted to be broken to nothing by the worst that can come—and—when once I get into steady work, with all hope past—shall live in my twilight perhaps more usefully to others than if my good were to come to myself. But if the evil *has* to come, the more I am prepared for it by all advice & previous warning, the better I shall bear it.

—You will have no difficulty, *now*, I think in accomplishing the Htown visit—but give me another address first, and then I will write to my boy's ideal.

Ever faithfully Yours,

J Ruskin.

Letter 41

Denmark Hill, s.

15th Sept. 1866.

Dear Mrs Cowper

I should have written before, but have been troubled by those great waves you are enjoying—they have devoured my poor Boulogne pilot,—at least—he is dead—his wife could only write to me, "Je suis veuve—et Jean Paul est orphelin." There never was a happier family. Mr L. T. will tell you it is the best possible thing that could happen a man, to be drowned—as he says it is the best thing for me to be turned from his door. Or else that it all comes of praying to the Madonna. But then poor little Jean Paul prayed quite straight—morning & night—to the Bon Dieu, for father & mother and me.—Much we all seem to take by it!

Well, to put you at ease about your relations with Mr L. T. I don't want to know a single word of what passes at Htown—I want and pray you to go there—in kindness & truth to all of us—(how otherwise could I ask *you* to go—if otherwise *I* could ask any one?—) to act—according to your power for—or against me as you see good. I know it will be for me if you can—rightly.

It is just because there is more clandestine character in the matter at present than I like, that I want you so much to go. The enclosed piece of letter of my cousins—(quite an unnecessary one, for I knew Rosie's mind perfectly before, and wanted no more messages except little dainty bye ones of no consequence)—will however be now serviceable in enabling you to understand clearly the relations between Rosie & me. Verbally & formally—and in all practical right—she is wholly free—she has promised *nothing*—I would not accept even as much as she would have given. But in inner *fact* and force of things—I am certain that for the next two years she is

mine:—I am as sure she will not alter her purpose of keeping her heart free, till then, as that the Liffey will not run backwards. Now her father & mother have no conception of this—and I do not like the position at all. All their plans for her will be thwarted for *more* than two years, by circumstances of which they are wholly ignorant—if things stay as they are.

If *you* think this right—I will say, & think no more—but rest.

But I want you to let Rosie talk to you—if she will. It is as much a kindness to the parents as to any one else. They have not her confidence—cannot have: The father cannot—because she knows he does not understand me and cannot judge for *me*—and Rosie is always acting now for me, not for herself. The mother cannot—because we were once very dear friends, and the power of the daughter over me justifiably now pains her with a not ignoble jealousy—for the mother is in many ways greater-gifted than Rosie—and feels that she ought to have been always principal in power over me—which may perhaps be true—but she can't understand that she can't be to me what Rosie can—she thinks I ought not to need anything else than full friendship now that I am so old, and then, this is complicated with the real womanly weakness and unavoidably womanly pain of dethroned—or abdicating, beauty. But this makes her bitter & scornful, & separates her from Rosie. So the child is *alone*.

Now, you know all. Do now as you think best—and tell me nothing of what you judge or do. My own view—disturbed as it is by wild hope and wilder pain—is yet sternly this—that if Rosie loves me *wisely*,—there would be a great deal to write, about this little apparently forgotten word. But you can write that, all, yourself. Things are all right;—the clandestine colour—or discolour—cannot be helped—for a time—for her health would not allow her parents to act with decision—even if they knew all—(if she were quite well & strong I should not allow things to be as they are for an instant).

But if she is only acting in pity for me—and childish tenderness—things are all wrong: and very cruelly ordered for me—and dangerously for herself.

There is yet another element I want to know—the degree of absolute final resistance which the father would offer—and the mode of it—This—as far as you can discover and tell me, I think you honourably & kindly may—if you cannot without pressing wrongly or imprudently of course you will not. The one main thing is to let Rosie have you to speak to.

Yet, observe, I don't want you to tell me even which way you think it is. But to guide Rosie—as far as you can.

And so I leave all to your loving kindness.

Ever gratefully yours

J Ruskin.

Letter 42

Denmark Hill, s.
28th September. 1866

Dear Mrs Cowper

Your note has made me very happy. I felt always convinced that you did not know how much ground for hope I had—but you seemed to think it so fearfully impossible that she *could* care for me that I couldn't tell you. Not that I can believe it a bit, myself, only it *was* terrible to find *you* so incredulous too. I don't mean that I distrust the child's word or faith. I am as sure of her as of the standing of the Jungfrau crest, for what she has promised—only I don't know if it is pity—or love—that stays her—and it makes all the difference.

It was pretty and right of you to scratch out "patient," but Jacob was not so astonishing a person neither. Only give me *his* chance! let Mr La Touche take me for a herdsman—*at Harristown*—give me a shed to sleep in—and the husks that the swine did eat, for food—and see if I should tire! But, as it is—I am so sick already for the sight of her, that—if it were not that it would plague herself, I would go to Ireland now, and lie down at their gate—and let them do what they chose with me, but I would see her. It is strange—I never heard in any story—or any history—(that's not a right distinction—but may serve) of any lover's doing that—yet it seems to me the simplest thing to do. How could they help themselves—if I chose to do it?—They might have me carried away—if they chose to have talk over the whole county—but I should simply come back again, & back. What could they do—but let me see her. I would make terms for an hour's look, and no talk.—I would do it instantly, if it were not for teazing *her*.

For one thing—you will never hear me complain again of lifes being too short—or if I do—(God grant it may ever again

be happy enough to make me do so)—it will only be that *part* of it is. For I have lived a long sorrowful life in these last six years.

Rosie is a real Irish child—whatever else she may be. Fancy her telling Joan that "now I had waited so long, it couldn't much matter to wait that little bit longer!"—a fine reason—truly. It's just eight hundred and twenty eight days—twenty four hours long each—to her 21st birthday.[27] And its eight hundred & fifty eight to the day when she told me I might "ask the same."[28] And to think how long one hour is!—when one's waiting, for some things.

Well—you know it isn't of any use to talk about it with reference to your visit there. For first—you must be able to say that you are not going to communicate with me on the subject at all. Of course I would not ask you to give her any message: and as I wrote to you before—I shall not ask you to tell *me* anything. I want her to be able to speak to you, but I have a notion she will be so closely looked after during these two days that she will have no chance. Thank you always however for going—if you *do* go. But I should'nt be surprised if M^r^ La T. said that there were disagreeable people there and that you would'nt be comfortable. I am past all of disappointment now,—except for my one beacon light:—nothing remains to me—all my delights are gone—and my friends dead—or lost—M^rs^ La Touche herself is the very ashes of what she used to be to me, and in little things—all goes adversely to me.—I am sure you won't go, after all. But I must write you one little line tomorrow—please bear with me. Ever yours,

J Ruskin

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[27] Which occurred on January 3, 1869.

[28] That is, her hand in marriage, which he had already requested on February 2, 1866.

Letter 43

Denmark Hill, s.

29th Septr. 1866

Dear Mrs Cowper

Yes this *once* more!

Yesterdays letter was only to talk a little—uselessly—except that it lets me breathe—for a little while—when I may talk of her. But this that I have to say today is more needful.

Look here: I know the La Touches don't know what they are doing—or they would not do it—and *I* can't make them understand—you may, a little. They could no more do this to me that they are now determined on, if they knew & felt the meaning of it, than they could fasten me to a pillar and saw me in sunder. They would not dare to do that—would neither have courage nor physical cruelty enough to give me ten minutes sharp pain and end me;—yet they think nothing of poisoning my life and thoughts day by day and killing me with an *infinite* pain. They took the child away from me—practically—four years ago—and since that day of April 1862, I have never had one happy hour,—all my work has been wrecked—all my usefulness taken from me—I am not given, indeed, to think much of that—and yet I know there are many who love me—whom I might have loved and helped—whom I cannot love because of *this*—though I could have loved dearly through *her*;—there are hundreds—literally hundreds, whom I know—among my work people alone—who are all more or less paralysed and broken because I am, I, who, weak as I might be—was once their leader—and now have no strength or heart to lead them. And there are others—(surely many others?—) who *were* more or less helped by my work—and would have been, by its maturer energy—far more—who are now discouraged by every word I say

—and all through this. You may tell me it ought not to be so—but it *is* so—and will be. I don't say I ought not to be braver—But I am not. There *is* a little good in me—which, helped, might have been great good. No man of honester or simpler purpose lives—no man more merciful or just—I say it fearlessly—no man of kinder heart (if you will carefully distinguish kindness from affection—for I never loved many—and now—but this child, none) and yet, I am denying myself many things that I may help those whom I have never seen. And this might all have been carried up and on into bright life—if these two people—one "religious"—the other saying that she loves me had but trusted—the one his God—and the other, the truth of her daughters heart & mine, so far as to deal with mere justice by us both. It is not as if they had been asked to risk their daughters happiness. It was not *I* who would have asked for help at that cost. If it would indeed not be well for her to come to me, I would live on the other side of the world rather than she should. No man could be more easily convinced of this,—if this be so;—only it must be by my own watching—and by the words of *her* own lips. They ran *no* risk in letting us be as we were—no risk whatever in any wise. *My* pain might have been—in one way, a little greater—but it would have been acquiesced in—sustained resignedly,—without indignation—with full acknowledgment of God's hand in it, with conclusive putting it in His hand again—and trust to Him of all my tears—which now—it is with sense of horror—and mischance—and doubtful, helpless —striving to the light—and writhing—as a worm "cloven in vain"—above all—with scorn of the "religion" which is so merciless to me—and through that—the doubt of all other. And they are doing the worst for themselves also. Had they left us free—nay, if they will yet leave us free now—and let Rosie write to me in her old way—no error at all is possible for either of us,—that which is best in this matter for her,† and for them therefore, must, as far as human truth can reach it, be hers and theirs—if they persist—indeed I may yet conquer them—but with farther loss of my own best life and irrevocable shadow between them and me—Or they *may* conquer me and kill me—and I doubt if it will be well for

them, even so,—for many, besides myself, it will be ill—"if anything *is* ill" (to counter your consolation [*illegible*]).

†They may say—the mere contingency of my winning her *is not to be endured by them—but why this?* If they either of them believed one word of the one calumny abroad against me—they ought never to have let me *speak* to their child. If they do not, what else is there so dreadful in me?—I am old—(older now, by ten years for what they have done to me)—but many a youth is indeed older yet, and contingently nearer the dominion of the shadow of death. No human creature can say I have injured them.—Thousands can say I have aided them—I am pure-hearted—pure-bodied—many—both young & old—love me—the young most—and I love their daughter & have loved her—as few men ever love—young or old. I do not say or think that, for all this, they ought not to try to separate us: But assuredly not in the way they have dealt with me hitherto and are dealing now. They ought to leave both of us wholly free—and prove to me in a generous & human way that my love for her could not make her happy.—Then they would be troubled with me no more—and I,—whatever came to me—should know that I had "fallen into the hand of God—not into the hand of Man."

Indeed I will burden you no more, now, but will be

Ever gratefully yours,

J Ruskin.

Letter 44

Denmark Hill, s.

[October 6, 1866][29]

Dear M^rs^ Cowper

There's no post tomorrow—Forgive me—but I want you to have seen her—I could'nt wait till Monday to know if you had—and I may be hindered from getting into town tomorrow. —Again forgive me. Don't answer but one word—in any case. If you say there's *no* answer, I shall understand you have not seen her,—and I do not hope better (it is for the worst always with me, in these things)—only I could'nt wait.

Ever your grateful J Ruskin

I never *meant*, by the way to press this father. I wanted only to know if his resolution would be final under certain far away conditions. Of course his *no* is plain enough, as things are.—I have accepted that long ago.—I wanted only to ask how he himself would have me act, under certain conceivable conditions.

[29] It is clear in this letter that Ruskin is impatient for news from Harristown, which, as Letter 45 indicates, he did receive on October 6. It is most probable, then, that Letter 44 was written earlier on the same day, for the reference in it to "no post tomorrow" suggests that it was written on a Saturday, and October 6 was the first Saturday that Ruskin might have had news of Mrs. Cowper's Harristown visit (in this regard, compare Letter 43, written the Saturday before, with Letter 45, in which he acknowledges receipt of the letters "from her place."

Letter 45

Denmark Hill, s.
6th October [1866][30]

Dear Mrs Cowper

This is only to thank you for the three lovely little letters, from her place—and to say it is a great relief to me from one weary longing I had, that you have seen her & let her "open her petals" to you a little. You know I told you it was that intensity of pure heartedness which was always her great charm to me—but my great distress also. Religious enthusiasm is one thing—love, another. It is vain and foolish to confuse the two: They sanctify each other—(I say this deliberately—the Religion being *profane* without Love—as love with religion—)—but the one cannot take the place of the other, and my own impression always is that Rosie really cares very little for me, but that the little is made to seem great to her own heart by the deep religious enthusiasm which directs it. And then you see that the whole question of what is right or wrong—wise or unwise—in this matter—depends on the faith that may be given to that Religion itself. If Rosie's faith is well founded—she and I are alike safe in what her God will guide her to. But——? —That is the fatal sign which has taken the place of the † —for so many of us now—and all depends on the answer to that. If unanswerable—it seems to me that all worldly wisdom would consist in refusing to let Rosie go on in *this* trust—by refusing myself to trust to it.

—But I have trespassed on you already too long beyond thanks. I hope you yourself enjoyed the Harristown visit a little & Mr Cowper.

[30] The letter reveals that Mrs. Cowper actually did go to Harristown for Ruskin. The year, then is 1866, as other letters dealing with this visit are so dated.

I wait—still anxiously—your fuller letter. My own health seems failing fast & steadily at present & this makes me look very darkly on all things—much more so than this spring, when I came to you first to ask for help.

I liked my little flower—only please don't call it "toad flax"—It is the "Erba della Madonna" of the Venetians—

Ever gratefully Yours,

J Ruskin

You got *both* my long letters, I hope?

So good of you, to write when you needed rest so much.

Denmark Hill, s.
9th October [1866][31]

Dear Mrs Cowper

I can't thank you anyhow enough, but don't you feel now why I was so wild with disappointment when you wrote first you wer'nt going? I knowing how the child needed you— My cousin has a lovely letter from her today saying "she feels as if you had taken the greater part of her away with you." She *was* so happy in the little talks you gave her and in the before dinner ones with Mr Cowper and you. I'm very thankful to have you *both* now with me.

I've to go down to Harrow today to talk to the boys, and I can't trust myself to begin writing anything that is in my heart—only then poor thanks. Ever yours

J Ruskin

[31] Ruskin refers in the text to his visit to Harrow, where he lectured on October 9, 1866—hence the year ascribed.

Denmark Hill, s.
Wednesday [Autumn, 1866—Spring, 1868][32]

Dear M^rs^ Cowper

I cannot come to Curzon St but my cousin would like very much to be with us in the evening. So we will both be at 45 Gt Marlborough St—waiting—before ½ past eight—do not be in any concern to be severely punctual—it will not matter if we wait for you. With love to M^r^ Cowper, always affectionately Yours.

S^t^ C.

[32] It is not possible to date this letter more closely. The formal address to the Cowpers is seldom used by Ruskin after the spring of 1868, and "St. C." is not used until the autumn of 1866.

Letter 48

Denmark Hill, s.

18th Oct. 1866

Dear Mrs Cowper

Indeed I would fain come—but I dare not talk—or hear about her just now. I am strangely weak and ill, and it seems wrong to think of her, or hope in the least, and this is very bitter and terrible to me, and I'm looking horrid and old and pale, and I'm ashamed that you should see me—I got chilled at Kensington the other day and have cough coming on which may shut me up for some days:—it will be an excuse for looking ill however afterwards, and then I'll come—please don't *forget* anything in the meantime—because you know—if you let me ask—I shall ask—ever so many things. Only, you know, it was'nt so much for me, as for her, because I knew she had no one to speak to—that I wanted you so much to go there—for I knew enough to rest on—for myself—only I wanted you to know her—and to be able to comfort me—or at least to pity me, with the understanding you now have of the pain—and of what she was to me—and is—and may be—to all—except me. So deep thanks for the letters.

And do not any more think there was any word wrong in what you wrote, because it made me angry. It was simply the saying, to you, that it "could *never* be"; because however fixed their own thoughts may be, it seems—(it *is*, to my judgment)—deep insult to say this to my friend. For why am I so utterly inferior to—such a poor clergyman as they let Emily[33] once give hope to—her brothers tutor—as to make it their resolve to see me die rather than let me also have so much as one ray of hope?

[33] Who, in 1865, married Major the Honourable Bernard Ward, fourth son of Viscount Bangor.

—Do not answer this note—I only wanted to explain my feeling to you—there was not one syllable in your letter except the mere repetition of the saying which you felt it due to me to repeat. Do not vex yourself any more for me now—you have done all you can, in the loveliest way.

Ever with affectionate regards to Mr Cowper

Your grateful St C.

Letter 49

Denmark Hill, s.
[*ca.* October 20, 1866][34]

Dear Mrs Cowper,

Perhaps I give you too much pain, and make you think less hopefully of me, by expressing these passionate thoughts. But it is not that I cannot master them and myself, as far as expression, or conduct, is concerned—only I want Rosie and you to understand the pain.—You do—though not quite the manner of it—she does not, and yet I cannot reject the thought of her being in some way inspired and commissioned to teach & save me, and it is all so wonderful, in its bitterness.

Look here—If I were lying wounded—bleeding slowly to death—and Rosie were withheld by her father from coming to bind the wound—she would not then be content to bid me "not stir—lest I should break the charm." Now this is literally so—in a far deeper sense. Every hour of this pain takes more life out of my soul—It may, if I conquer it—(even supposing she *never* can help me) give me a certain calmness of bitter strength which I had not before, but otherwise it is simply making my heart cold and my hair grey—at a time—at *the* time, in all my life, when I most needed the help of any one who loved me. Do not think that I underrate the help she gives me—and if things were indeed as she fancies—if it were *possible* for my mind to become like hers in its mode of rest—such help would be all I needed. But it is because God does not teach her the *difference* between her & me, that I doubt all her messages.

[34] It was about this date that Rose sent Ruskin the verses mentioned in paragraph three of this letter. (See Derrick Leon, *Ruskin: The Great Victorian* [London, 1949], p. 371. Hereafter referred to as Leon.)

One *word* of *common sense,* as to the kind of life which she believes we might live together—counting justly the difference of age—circumstance—temper & the like—and the way in which supposing herself to love me, she could bear with the difference in our faiths—one word, I say of simple forethought and advice, whether such advice related to the contingency of her accepting or refusing me, would be worth a thousand verses to me, just now. I know you cannot get this—it is not in her power—and would not consist with her present ideas of her duty, to say anything of the kind,—and for such thought & tenderness as she expresses—do not think me ungrateful—but—forgive me—it is just because I have such perfect confidence in her truth and love that I don't much care for these pretty sayings—If I could write to her, I should say, My pettie, do you think after, through six years of my unbelieving, petulant, querulous love for you, you have never failed for a moment in your steady tenderness of care for me, that I doubt you *now,* when you know how intense the love was, and is;—(unbelieving and petulant *because* so great). Do you think I cannot trust you for three years—when I have tried you since you were a child? I know perfectly that you think of me—pray for me—and would and will—save me from all evil in your power. You need not send me any words to tell me this. But that which I *do* distrust in you, is knowledge of yourself—of me—of the world—and one word showing that you knew the real pain I was suffering, and that you had any clear conception of what my life was likely to be in *either* alternative, (your acceptance or refusal of me)—would give me more peace than a thousand texts.

So it is not a desperate wicked refusal of God's goodness in giving me so *much* of her, or of His voice—through her. I want you to see this clearly. I am so desperate, because I cannot feel it to be God's voice at all. And yet, I am always less sorrowful on the days when I most listen to it.

Ever your faithful S^{t} C.

Letter 50

Denmark Hill, s.
21st October [1866][35]

My kind φιλη,

Your letter was a great comfort to me last night, and made me feel rich—with even a little more than the riches it told me of—in its wise friendship. I think—if when I am better, you *would* drive out this far, some bright day—I would ask you things less nervously than in your own drawingroom—where I've always a sense of your having to forbid people to come in, when I want to talk about Rosie—or that if you hav'nt—they'll come in just when I'm getting absurd about her, and I never feel at ease for a moment. Besides I think there are some sketches here by Edward Jones which you would like better than anything you have seen of his.

My good physician-friend John Simon, who is in my heart in all ways and in all things—has been here—all the forenoon nearly; and he laughs at me for thinking myself old & ill—or at least irremediably ill—and says—if I would only be happy—and not halt between two opinions—& look on this thing as settled—and take the happiness of it without doubting, it would come all right.

I had a great deal more—oh, so much more to say—but there's no time left now—I had written this enclosed note for lady Florence for you to give her—and to ask her forgiveness for me—for I'm very fond of her.

—And I'll write and tell you when I'm a little less ashamed of myself, & ask you to come to talk.

Ever with affectionate regards to Mr Cowper, Your grateful St C.

[35] Although Ruskin does not regularly address Mrs. Cowper as Philè until the spring of 1868, the year ascribed seems highly likely. In a diary entry for October 21, 1866 (*Diaries*, II, 601) Ruskin speaks of Simon's presence in the "forenoon" as he does in the text of this letter. Similarly, allusions to his nervous and ill state appear in diary entries for a week to ten days before the date of this letter.

If you think you could send me a word or two today, my servant would come at any hour you order, for the [answer?].

Denmark Hill, s.
[Early November, 1866][36]

Dear M^rs^ Cowper

I am not ill; but dare not come to see you—or ask you to come to see me, being only able to get on by forcing myself to hard work—and dashing the other thoughts down the moment they come—that is why I have not come—If you could help me, or if I could help myself, in any way, I would come to take counsel with you, but I think nothing can be done yet. The father's letter to me was insolent in the last degree†—and I have never been able to do the slightest good by any appeal, or reasoning, to, or with him: I answered it firmly—not uncourteously, but I do not know what to tell him now, which those letters he has read have failed to tell him.

To the mother, who thinks me "faithless to her," what can I more say. Which of us *is* really faithless to the other. She —who caused me years of pining misery & doubt—by words concerning her daughter which now she calls it treachery to repeat—or I—who never spoke word of any human being of which I feared the repetition to *them*—or to all the world?

—But for her,—any *one* of Rose's many letters would have given me passionate joy & peace; and there were years of life in every sentence of them. She *destroyed* them all—slowly

[36] The close relationship between this letter and the one immediately following seems to justify the conjectural date. In both Ruskin refers to correspondence he had with Rose which her parents have read; further, the similarity of the references to Mrs. La Touche in both letters is revealing; and, finally, the question of whether or not Ruskin should write to Mr. La Touche comes up in both letters.

murdered me, day by day, and now she calls it treason, because I cannot lay my whole heart bare to the woman I love, without also telling her what it was that so long kept me from esteeming or understanding the deep grace she did me.

Yet I can forgive the mother all this,—but there is one thing I shall now never forgive, the miserable selfishness with which she now broods in anger over the momentary estrangement between her daughter & her—(accusing me of it instead of herself) and has no remorse for the sorrow she has caused me—nor thought—seemingly—for the bitterer sorrow which she hopes is for ever to dwell with me.

Ever your grateful S^{t} C.

If you still think there is anything I can with any hope of good, say to the father—tell me—and I will write to him and send you the letter to look over and forward or not as you think best.

†I enclose it—with my answer.

Letter 52

Please—one line, to say your cold is better.

Denmark Hill, s.

4th Novr. [1866][37]

Dear Mrs Cowper

I cannot write of these things—it is all terrible to me—and words are useless. I can neither tell you, nor any of them, what I would the more I say, the less they understand . I cannot retract anything I wrote of Mrs La Touche; Her "help him to forget us" is to me the Sin of Sins;—hopelessly frightful—unforgiveable—base—I do not mean unforgiveable in the common way—for when I have once loved any creature, I am true to them to the death—theirs or mine—through whatever decay of soul or body: and whatever she became—however she changed—*I* change not. But I mean unforgiveable, in that since she spoke those words—(not spoken *first* now) she never could be to me again what she was once—If you only could know how sacredly and devotedly, in all that was possible to me, in pure truth to her as wife and mother, I loved her, and would have—what would I not have done for her—except leave her: as she bade me—to her poor world of shadow and nameless—purposeless being—And then she says—"Forget," when *this* love has become

[37] Though 1868 is penciled on the MS, 1866 seems the more likely date because of the connection between this letter and the one that follows, which is dated November 11, 1866. In both there is talk of a possible letter to Mr. La Touche, with the hesitation about sending it perhaps providing the link between the two letters. Also, the quoted "forget" of Letter 53 seems a deliberately ironic echo of Mrs. La Touche's "Forget" in Letter 52.

Further evidence against the 1868 date is provided by Letter 91 below, which is dated November 30, 1868. The wording of Letter 91 strongly suggests that Ruskin is communicating with Mrs. Cowper for the first time since his return in October, 1868, from a trip to France. It is thus unlikely that he would have written to her on November 4, 1868, from his Denmark Hill address.

involved also with a deeper still—for which there was no true hindrance but that which she and her husband have now wrought indeed, in murdering me slowly—day by day for years,—for this—for ever—I shall charge them with—& judge them for—as in dying—For *this* is the bitter thing to me—that now I believe the best that they could grant—and all Rosie's sweet faith & pity—come too late. Did Rosie show you those letters?—Did *you* too misunderstand them?—I have been dazzled into some hope *since* then; but when I wrote those—I had no hope. The last words I spoke to her alone—in finally parting—were You *know* I have no hope. She said "why should you not"? I answered—"Rosie—you cannot have read those letters carefully—or you would understand why I cannot." For the letters were—in all the compass of them—just the repeating of one word—"Too late, Rosie, love." Too late.—They were all but a refusal even of the promise she gave & has repeated to you—and now they blame me for telling her the whole truth of what I had felt for her—My God—would they have had me refuse the child's grace to me—and not tell her I loved her?—not tell her the truth about all that had kept me from understanding her sweet ways and thoughts—till it was too late. If she is a child—and they can turn her as they think—away from me—it will ennoble her—not harm her, to remember that she *was* so loved—and by me. If she is a woman—much more—in answer to her first word of tenderness to me—had she the Right to know my heart—from the first to the last;—its fullness of love I could not have told—I did not permit myself even to attempt to tell.

I wrote the enclosed to the Master[38]—but do not send it him, even if you think it might do some good—I have never lied to my own soul—or to another—and there *is* a vain feigning of gentleness to him in this—which when I try myself—is not in me. For in truth—the only deep feeling about him in my heart just now is a kind of agony of thankfulness for his *pain*—the deep drawn breath of—as of one half slain—striking back.—It is of no use to tell me what I ought to feel—or ought to try to be to them—I cannot be but what I am—nor say but what I feel. Their *mis*reading of these letters is

[38] Evidently John La Touche, Rose's father.

very horrible to me, for I know with what entire nobleness and religion of passion they were written.

I only send this to thank you—and to show you I tried to do as you bade me. Nothing more can be done now—I have much—oh—how much—even through all this, to thank you for. Those words of her's which you copied for me—if they cannot give me hope—or make it right for me to hope—yet—how much do they not bring of strength and sanctification. Ever your grateful S^{t} C.

Letter 53

Denmark Hill, s.

11th November
1866.

Dear Mrs Cowper

On the morning when I received your note, I addressed mine to Mr L. T. and was carrying it to the postoffice, when my cousin asked me about it—and besought me so earnestly not to send it, saying that "she had good reasons, if I would but trust her," that I yielded to her and for the present, laid the letter aside. Do not for an instant think that I take my cousin's advice instead of your's, but she has had some letters lately which I believe, from the little she tells me, would have modified your own judgment:—this at least I know, that Rosie is quite happy, writing little songs and stories,—that her father & mother have made it up with her;—that they write pleasant letters to my cousin—and if they choose to ignore me—let them. I don't mean that Rosie does or ever would: but her religion keeps her happy, and, for her father and mother, they have now treated me too insolently to make it even right for me—with any respect either to Rosie or myself—to take farther steps—with any view to conciliation. For Rosie's happiness I would do anything (*bear* anything at least)—but that seems for the present enough secured—and I should probably only disturb it by any effort to alter the position of affairs. Besides—whatever I did or said, they would not let me write to her—far less see her—and if not—what does their opinion of me matter to *me*. They will "forget" it, some day—whatever it is. I am not well—but working hard at some bits of natural science, which I can still feel interest in—I don't want to write about anything that would wake me, or make me feel. Forgive this seemingly thankless note—& disbelieve all that so seems in it.

Ever with affectionate regards to M^r^ Cowper. Your grateful S^t^ C.

I should have told you before I had not sent the letter—but thought my cousin might change her mind—however, she still prays me earnestly to be quiet.

Letter 54

Denmark Hill, s.
[February 27, 1867][39]

Dear Mrs Cowper

I knew that was the chief reason for your not writing. I thought also you might be allowed to help *her* more, if you were known to give *no* help to me. It is better so. Neither you nor she, poor little thing, can help me now. If she could understand the suffering and the deadliness of it & how it kills the body and does *not* purge the soul, she might help me—not thus—Not by grave words one day—& going to the Crystal palace within two miles of me to amuse herself the next. By the way—I have a great curiosity to know—what any of the people thought that day she had the headache, & left—last year—Lady Florence—or her brother—or your husband himself? Did they think that she disliked me, and that I was annoying her?

There is no estrangement between me and Joan—I did a selfish thing and risked—and cost her, three days of pain, sharp enough, poor thing, in one last frantic effort to save the father & mother from fulfilling their work upon me. I besought him for Christ's sake—that I might see her face once more—He answered in such terms as—A Banker uses to his clerk I suppose—but the words did not matter—the deed is hardly believable to me yet.

You know—it is very pretty of her to be so anxious that I may be helped by sacrifice. Do you think she in the least knows what help there is in not being able to eat—nor sleep—

[39] The textual reference to the gospel readings "last night" is directly connected with *Diaries*, II, 612, under entry of February 25, 1867, where Ruskin records his reading of the Epistle and Gospel for the first Sunday in Lent. It is clear, then, that the letter was written "at two in the morning" of February 27 and continued later in the morning of the same day.

and moaning about my room, as I am just now—at two in the morning?—If I lie down—I shall only toss there—to & fro—I can't read—I *can* write—to you—to no one else—

I got her prayerbook—by true chance, as far as she was concerned—by God's grace indeed—as I have written in it—on my birthday, and though I had given up specialty of morning and evening reading as superstitious—I have gone back to it for the book's sake, now—and read a little bit—straight forward—irrespective of the day's service or form—as much or little as I find good.

And it is strange. It seems always to strike me where I need to be struck, & to comfort me when I need comforting (more than always—)—It would have saved me from doing that wrong which cost Joan such pain, if I had listened to it—it gave me the epistle for the 3rd S. after Epiphy, that morning. I tried it by Disobedience—and found it right—and now I feel as if I had committed a piece of the unpardonable sin. But it gave me the end of the gospel of the first Sunday in Lent, just when I was raging at myself worst, last night.

I knew she did not love me womanly—but I did not think she could have gone merrily wherever they wanted her—knowing I was in such pain—Or—*not* knowing it. If she had but had one headache *for* me—as once—against me! But the least she gave me—or none—would be enough for me—if only I could be near her always—and could be "cared for" only enough to make her happy.

Wednesday morning 8. oclock.—I have had some sleep—but I woke in the same horror—and I was going to write something horrid to you—but the book has said to me—"Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law—do ye not hear the Law?" So I cannot. Write to me—if you do know anything about that old headache—And then, you can't help me; so tell the old people you've done with me—& help *her*. Don't think though that I think she needs help for any sorrow about me—Set her to love her mother better, for one thing—& to make her mother understand she does—She's Cordelia—twenty times worse—if ever a girl was.

Ever yours. JR

Letter 55

Denmark Hill, s.
19th March [1867][40]

Dear Mrs Cowper

Thank you so much for your note. I am a little better, and very, very thankful for this comfort which you—can't give me. So I take it,—and it is better thus, and that nothing should come between you and her just now, or shorten your power of helping her. But what *will* come of it? I do not want you to tell me anything of what *she* says, but I wish you would tell me something of what you yourself feel—as to the possibilities of happiness for her in granting mine—or endeavouring to grant it—for mine could not be, but in her's. The intense hostility of the parents, now—(in answer to a stern statement of facts which I gave them the other day,) proceeding even to the length of gross and indecent insult—while it in no wise diminishes my chance of success—very materially affects the probability of happy future relations with them—not on their side, but mine. I do not know quite—how much I could forgive,—for love's sake. But I can more easily conceive the fulfilment of any personal sacrifice—than the forgiveness of certain words & acts. I could die for Rosie, if it were my duty to do so—rejoicingly—but I cannot feel as if I could ever see her father's face without scornful anger, but that is not what I meant. It is the thoughts you yourself have—as you see more of her—as to our fitness for each other—or unfitness—that I want to know.

[40] The year ascribed is based on a number of textual references: Ruskin's descriptions of the bitter March weather, expressions of increasing hostility toward Rose's parents (from whom he had had unfriendly letters in February and March of 1867), the request both in Letter 54 and in this letter that Mrs. Cowper find some way of helping Rose, and the references to his prayerbook that are common in letters of the time. See *Diaries*, II, 612-13, for additional confirmation of the evidence.

It is very frightful & wonderful. The sense of demons in the dark air, and in the cold—joins strangely with my own bitterness, as if all the black cold were sent for me only. And it might be all so sweet & right & worthy of us all—but for the mere, sheep-like—stonelike stupidity of these Irish people.

Thank you again for your kind words about my mother.

As soon as spring comes, I want to see you.

Love to M^{r} Cowper.

Ever affectionately and gratefully Yours

S^{t}. C.

My prayerbook helps me a great deal—but I've got into the terrible Passion Week services—in reading straight through, and I never know how much or how little I should read. (Could you have fancied *any* religious people angry at this affair of the book!)

Letter 56

Denmark Hill, s.

[March, 1867] [41]

My kind φιλη

I do not think it is at all right for you to come out in this bitter weather,—if you caught cold, I should be sorry. Also I am in a state of black anger, into which the pain has gradually knit and resolved itself—(not with *her*, of course) in which I am not good—to see—or speak to. So wait till the days are kinder—and till I have got into my mechanical work & furrow again, and it will be nicer, every way: at all events the grass and flowers will be—though even they cannot quite forgive the Frost that kills.

Ever your grateful S[t] C.

[41] The date is suggested by frequent references in *Diaries*, II, 613, to the extremely bad weather of this month and by evidence in the diaries and other letters of this time of Ruskin's difficulties with Rose's parents, difficulties which perhaps explain the "black anger" of this letter and the "scornful anger" of the preceding one.

Letter 57

Denmark Hill, s.
26th March [1867] [42]

Dear Mrs Cowper

Your letter is not "nonsense"—but it seems to me that only one side of the matter is considered in it—Rosie is a very dear & noble child—but you must not think that all the conditions are to be of her making—If our faiths are to be reconciled, it seems to me quite as reasonable to expect that an Irish girl of 19, who cannot spell—reads nothing but hymn-books and novels—and enjoys nothing so much as playing with her dog, should be brought finally into the faith of a man whom Carlyle & Froude call their friend, and whom many very noble persons call their teacher, as that he should be brought into hers; The difference of age is an evil—but *it* never troubles me. It is difference of temper and of general habits of life which are really the things to be considered. I have never seen an unhappy marriage between a girl & old man, when the marriage was really one of affection—the question is—*is* there the affection? For the relations with the Father & mother—the breach *cannot* be wider—on my side at least—and if you have lately had any communication with them—I should think you must have seen it was sufficiently wide on theirs—There is no possibility of reconciliation—contemptuous endurance is all that either of them can have from me—Rosie must come out from her country and kindred for me, like Ruth or Rebekah—or she is not worthy of the love I bear her—and she shall see it perish in white ashes rather than ignobly given to her. If she can join herself to my life and its purposes, and be happy, it is well—but I am not to be made a grotesque chimneypiece ornament—or disfigure-

[42] The textual reference to Rose's age establishes the year ascribed.

ment—of the drawingroom at Harristown. I will serve her with all the strength of my life—but not with its weakness—I should think by next week these equinoctial winds will have done howling, and my peachblossoms will be out. Then I want you to come here. I cannot come and dine.

Ever affectionately Yours

S[t] C.

Letter 58

Denmark Hill, s.

14th May, 1867

My dear Mrs Cowper

I very resolutely abstained from writing, even to ask about your sister,[43] in order that it might not seem as if I wanted to teaze you into sending me more letters. But I am very sincerely thankful your anxiety for her is less.

Come any afternoon you like this week; but, if not tomorrow, let me know which it will be. Your little niece [44] will like the garden at present, and seeing my bird's nests; and my cousin shall be at home to receive her.

Rosie is a darling little stupid Irish rose—to ask you to go to Cambridge [45] and become a member of the University.

She can't mean the lecture I am to give at the Royal Institution?[46]—at least I took no means to inform her of that one—and it will be of no interest, such as she ought to ask you to lose an evening for.

With faithful regards to Mr Cowper

Ever gratefully Yours,

J Ruskin

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[43] Marianne de Burgh, known in the family as "Mummy."

[44] Juliet (b. 1866), the adopted child of Charles Spencer Cowper (William's brother) and his wife Lady Harriett Anne, widow of Count d'Orsay. In 1869, the year of Lady Harriett's death, the Cowpers adopted Juliet.

[45] Where Ruskin went on May 23 to receive an honorary degree and to deliver the Rede Lecture (*Diaries*, II, 618).

[46] On June 7, 1867, entitled "On the Present State of Modern Art " The lecture is reprinted in *Works*, XIX, 195 ff.

Letter 59

Denmark Hill, *s.*

4th June. 67

Dear Mrs Cowper,

It is very nice and kind of you to come on Friday, and I'll try and mend the lecture[47] a little in the dullest places—or rather, I'll try and mend it in the best bits—and cut the dullest out—(—which will be sharp surgery—) and here are the only two reserved seats I have, for you & lady Florence: and two other places besides.

But please don't ask me to dine—I should be always fancying some one was upstairs or in the other room. I can't. I should like to meet Mr Oliphant[48] better than almost any one; but I'm not fit for talking. By the way—I doubt not that Mr Cowper and you understand why I do not move in reply to the Times article[49]—(if you chanced to see or hear of it)—and for the people who do not understand—I am content to let them think what they will. I shall simply republish my letters without a changed syllable—and take no farther notice of the matter—at least that is my present intention. If *any* notice, it will be in a word or two of preface to the letters.

Ever gratefully yours,

J Ruskin

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[47] See Letter 58, n. 46.

[48] Laurence Oliphant (1829-88), a most bizarre Victorian. Author and diplomat, Oliphant nearly lost his life during an attack on the British Legation at Yeddo (Tokyo) in 1861. He subsequently came under the influence of the mysterious spiritualist and adherent to the occult, Thomas Lake Harris (see Letter 112, n. 34), and left England to join, in July, 1867, first at Amenia, N. Y., and later at Brocton, N. Y., a weird utopia controlled by Harris and known as the Brotherhood of the New Life. Oliphant lived for some time in America doing menial tasks and was later permitted by Harris to return to Europe. But it was not until 1881 that Oliphant freed himself from Harris's domination, when he went with his wife to live in the Middle East. A recent and popular study of this strange man is Philip Henderson's *Life of Laurence Oliphant* (London, 1956).

[49] Of June 3, 1867. For details, which concern an unfortunate altercation between Ruskin and Carlyle, see *Works,* XVII, 481-82.

Letter 60

Denmark Hill, s.

14th June 67

Dear Mrs Cowper,

So many thanks—for writing so quickly. I fear indeed you had too true ground for your impression from the letter. I have none from Joan today. There must I think be one tomorrow, with some clue.

If I could spare the child *any* pain now—I would never trouble them more—but by no self-sacrifice can I help her—unless I know that she wishes it. It looks much like a Shakespeare tragedy (just now)—where all the misery is brought on by petty mistake—and all beautiful hope & strength cast away in vain. If I hear from Joanna tomorrow, whether good or evil—(good, alas, it cannot be—but may be less evil than I fear)—I will write to you.

If I were strong and cheerful otherwise and able for my work, I could wait in certainty of conquest and of making her happy—but I am weak & ill—and if the parents only give way when it is too late—and Rosie herself cannot save me—it will be a darker thing than any of them believe possible—They *cannot* understand, I suppose, that a man of my age can suffer for love like a youth—But who would not—for *such* a love:—She is so different from other creatures that nothing else can in any wise break the steady sense of *utter want.* She herself said to me once—"I think you ought to consider yourself very well off—to have Joan"—She said this quite seriously—with no shadow of jest, or jealousy,—meaning simply that Joan ought to be a great comfort to me, and that I ought'nt to whine so for my own own [*sic*] mistress—And Joan was there;—so that I could'nt answer.

—Why are *you* also sad—in that electric [*sic*] state? Your sister is better?

Ever affectionately Yours
St C.

I have sent you the book—my own copy—not writing your name in it because of its dark title. But keep it—It is all so beautiful—so far as I have read. And it must be—elsewhere.

Letter 61

Denmark Hill, S.

25th June 67

Dear Mrs Cowper,

I am so thankful you are going to send the book, though unmarked,—but indeed I *meant* the marked copy for you. I thought you would not mind the mark in it. I make *no* effort whatever to say or convey anything to her, for I am quite sure of her faith in me; I know she never has a moment's shadow of concern about that. She never had, from the day she was twelve years old—till now. All that troubles me is the fear she is deceiving herself in thinking she cares for me—and that when she sees me again, she won't like me.—I've no more doubt of her, as long as she does *not* see me, than she has of me. But I think she is caring for a dream—not for poor me—or rather—caring for my mind and heart only; not for the burden and mortality that they bear with them.

What strange work it will be, when it comes fairly to the push—and the Father & mother begin to come to their senses —and feel where they are!

I'm going down into Scotland for a week or two—please send me a line—if after tomorrow to care of Lord Henry Kerr. Huntly Burn. Mel*rose*. I always underline my pet bits—even in addresses—I don't think I could have got myself stirred out of the shadow here—but for that last syllable.

Are you better? Send me word of that—and if the child seems less disturbed. My impression is they had forbidden her to write to my little friend Constance Hilliard,[50] just at the time she wrote to you.

Love to Mr Cowper. Does the East wind darken Panshanger—into the aspect of November—else why have you come back—what is the use of taking care of the parks now—the mob will soon be the Gardeners, everywhere.

Ever affectionately Yours,

J Ruskin

[50] A friend of Ruskin's from childhood, she later became Mrs. W. H. Churchill. With Ruskin, Joan Agnew, Sir Walter and Lady Trevelyan, she toured the Continent in 1866. See Letter 35.

PART III

Part III

Letters 62 to 98

1868

THE LETTERS of 1868 are perhaps the most intense, the most painfully urgent, that Ruskin wrote Mrs. Cowper. True, the familiar pattern reasserts itself, but this time in more somber colors than in the past. Again, the disappointment, confusion, false accusation, desperation—temporarily allayed by transient happiness—are manifest. In this year, too, the relations of Ruskin and Rose are further complicated by Percy La Touche breaking his engagement to Joan Agnew, Ruskin's cousin; this provides a minor theme for the following letters, as does the death of Rose's sister, Emily La Touche Ward.

Most disastrous for Ruskin in 1868 is the disagreeable reminder of the 1854 annulment of his marriage to Euphemia ("Effie") Chalmers Gray Ruskin. Echoes of an "evil report" circulating about his marriage, of his treatment of the frivolous Effie, of "calumnies arising out of my former history," recur in the March letters. Of course, there had been gossip in the fifties when the marriage was annulled on grounds of Ruskin's impotency.[1] When he showed an interest in another woman—Rose La Touche—the chatter commenced again. And it seems very likely that Mrs. La Touche, early in 1868, hinted

[1] Legal and medical men—to say nothing of literary critics—have discussed this problem endlessly, and the legality of the annulment still seems open to debate. Diaries, correspondence, and memoirs (e.g., Greville MacDonald's *Reminiscences of a Specialist*) suggest that Ruskin was not physically impotent. The fullest account of the subject is found in Leon, pp. 402 ff.

to her daughter of the enigma of Ruskin's sexual life. For he is fearful in the March letters that Rose has found out something to his disadvantage and that she perhaps possesses

> . sure knowledge of some fatal obstacle to our marriage, such as she could only have obtained by conversation with other women. "

So ambivalent is Rose's attitude toward him—alternating between withdrawal and acceptance, depending upon her religious or physical state—that it is not surprising to find her, apparently in the face of family objection, giving him cause to hope again, which cause he joyously reports to Mrs. Cowper. But the pleasure of this is blighted a fortnight later when he lectures in Dublin on "The Mystery of Life and Its Arts."[2] Rose's rejection—this time effected through strong parental influence—cast Ruskin into depths which prompted, in Letter 85, a rare confession—one perhaps more suitable for William, rather than Georgiana, Cowper and distinctly suggestive of earlier auto-erotic practices. Difficulties evidently persisted through the summer and autumn, with Mrs. La Touche, in December, writing Mrs. Cowper the legal facts, as she understood them, of Ruskin's alleged impotency and vehemently condemning his familiarity about Rose while in Dublin in the preceding spring. Mrs. La Touche also excoriates Ruskin for so much as considering marriage in the light of the "disgusting history of his past." Further, she uses the diplomacy of Mrs. Cowper to mollify Joan Agnew's feelings respecting the engagement to Percy La Touche and indicates that Rose's mental state is so tenuous that even the sight of Ruskin's handwriting can, according to the physicians, induce cerebral disturbance.

From July to November, 1868, Ruskin does not communicate with Mrs. Cowper. He is abroad for many weeks in France and is pursuing varied interests. His diary at this time suggests a more quiescent mental state, and he records a cessation of serpentine dreams.[3] Neither does he mention his troubles over Rose. One may assume his attention is temporarily diverted. Ironically, in the last half of 1868 it is the

[2] A lecture rife with biographical significance.

[3] *Diaries,* II, 661.

peripheral actors—Mrs. Cowper, Mrs. La Touche, and the MacDonald family (who offended the La Touches by supporting Ruskin)—who come to the fore. Ruskin himself, to judge by available documents, seems almost totally unaware of the storm swirling about his head.

Of considerable interest in the letters of 1868 is the shift in Ruskin's attitude toward Rose. For the first time, feelings of antagonism appear. Where, in the earlier letters, he abased and humiliated himself as he wrote Mrs. Cowper about his beloved, he now becomes aggressive, even hostile, as he writes of her. He remarks that he cannot pity Rose because he feels she does not love him; neither has she the power, he asserts, of suffering as he suffers; and he even refers to her as a "patient murderess" who has destroyed his life. He attributes a loss of usefulness to her, a valid accusation surely, for Ruskin dissipated his energies and intellectual gifts in fruitless pursuit of the girl at a time when his powers should have been at their zenith. In later years, too, after Rose's death, he failed to exorcise himself of her uneasy influence, and consequently he never again was able to focus his immense resources and gifts and find for them an intellectual center, as he could, for instance, in the forties. Antipathy toward Rose, then, becomes evident as the correspondence moves sadly forward.

Denmark Hill, s.

2nd February. 1868

My dear Mrs Cowper

Although I have no difficulty in accounting in many ways for your prolonged silence, I am yet desirous of being assured that it is not owing to anything said of me either in Ireland or elsewhere, which has induced you to think me in any way undeserving of your former friendship. I do not wish to renew our correspondence—but I have an uneasy feeling at its sudden & strange cessation, which I hope it may be in your power to remove.

With my regards to Mr Cowper accept my thanks for your former kindness and believe me respectfully yours.

J Ruskin.

Letter 63

Denmark Hill, s.

4th March. 1868

My dear Mrs Cowper,

I could not write yesterday nor can I write much today but you must come to me.

Rose has no need for shame, in anything that she has done or thought,—in even what she has *not* done—she is not in the deep sense to blame—but her mother only.

She wished me to be Lover & Friend to her always—no more. She spoke fearlessly, as a woman in Shakespeare would have done—as the purest women are always able to do, if left unspoiled.—She thought it was what I wished, as it had been so with my first wife. On my refusal she refused all that she *could* refuse. She cannot, my Love nor my sorrow.

Of course she charged me not to speak this—but she had no right to lay any charge upon me, nor did I accept it—I can guard her honour as well as my own—better than she; and *my* honour needs that this should be known to those who deserve my trust.

I repeat—she has no ground for shame—For bitterness of grief—in what she *now* permits to be enforced upon her of horrible & merciless silence—not to me only—but to my more innocent, and more causelessly and wantonly injured, poor little lamb of a cousin[4]—in this she has cause for grief—And in this that her words of trust in God she has made Blasphemies to me—that her prayers she has made mockeries—that she has destroyed my faith in womanhood—my Love for all creatures—that she has ruined a great Life that was wholly trusted to her—and become the patient murder-

[4] A reference to the broken engagement of Percy La Touche and Joan Agnew.

ess day by day of the creature who loved her more than all creatures living.

You have been very wrong, also—You ought to have felt more responsibility in dealing with me—I *am* worth more thought than you have given me—Since the letters of refusal came, I have heard nothing—known nothing—worse than nothing—only the mother lies of word—lies of silence—lies of thought—falsehood too intense to recognize itself. Rose promised to write to me on Xmas day—and did not—and has cursed the day for ever to me into darkness with her broken faith—I went roaming about all Xmas day & the day after—so giddy & wild that in looking back to it I can understand the worst things that men ever do. You need not be afraid to come & see me though—I am quite at rest—now—writing the history of flint—I shall never write more gentle words now.

You ought not to have gone on writing to her on *these* terms—you ought not to have given her that Kiss—*only*. You ought to have been resolute to deal with her soul to the full truth of it—or to leave her.

Come and see me, when you can—any day—any time—(except next Friday afternoon). You must know more—and you must not write to her—unless on other terms. Of all the *[illegible]* things throughout this matter nothing has impressed me more than the way M^{r} Cowper spoke when last he came to me—It might have been wise & right—for most people—but to me it was so wrong, in its coldness and slightness, that it is, among the Spiritual Phenomena of this dark Time—one of the saddest & darkest that I have to think about—that a man of kind & right purpose should be so misled as to what was needed of him by another.

Ever with affectionate regards to M^{r} Cowper, your grateful S^{t} C.

I should have told you before I had not sent the letter—but thought my cousin might change her mind—however, she still prays me earnestly to be quiet.

Letter 64

Denmark Hill, s.

[March, 1868][5]

Dear Mrs Cowper

I will only that I may not weary you in your illness thank you for your kind feeling, and especially for your goodness to my cousin—who *can* be helped—more than I, and for the interpretation of Mr Cowper's way—and for promising to come.—What I chiefly need is to know the facts about Rose & what she *means*—these I have a right to know,—then I can determine what else is right. *If* she suffers, God forbid I should add one pang—but if she does not, and is comforted by her religion in doing wrong, I know that I shall be able to show you that it is your duty to her to make her know what she has been compelled to do—and that it is not God's hand that is guiding her. It is the saddest certainty in history that the most earnest Faith has often been the falsest; and the purest—the most cruel.

I cannot pity Rose, for I do not think she loves me—or knows the pain of Love. The terrible final letter had words in it which on English lips would have meant much—but the close of it was in its inner signs, so heartless that I tore it asunder in my pain—Still I have the pieces—& you shall read & judge for me—

God knows I am not selfish in my hardness to her—If I knew she had but the hundredth part of my pain—I would bear mine thrice to save her from it—only let her know what she is to me—and what I bear for her.

I have a letter today from an Irish girl[6]—one of my old Winnington ones—very dear & simple—who has *seen* her

[5] Ruskin's thanks here "for the interpretation of Mr Cowper's way" suggests that Mrs. Cowper has responded to Ruskin's complaint of Mr. Cowper in the letter immediately preceding.

[6] Lily Armstrong, daughter of Sergeant Armstrong of Dublin.

often lately—and says she always looks sad—and that her mother never goes out in the carriage with her—she is always alone.

—But I cannot write & should not—to pain you uselessly.

Ever very gratefully Yours,

S^{t} C

Letter 65

Denmark Hill, s.

[March, 1868][7]

Dear Mrs Cowper

How kind you have been to my poor little cousin—you have given her more peace and brightness than I have seen in her—since she was hurt—it is very dear of you.

Do not fear coming, to help *me* also. —You cannot think I would ask you to do anything you did not feel that it was right to do,—least of all anything that would hurt Rose, in vain. I am deeply thankful for many things you told my cousin. I had been left in depth of darkness—about all things. Do not wonder that I find it so hard to trust—I have never yet trusted, without being deceived—I trusted Rose with my whole spirit & life.

There is a very little thing I want to say to you—but I *do* want to say it. —My cousin was saying that you thought I did not know you again after twenty years, because you were so changed.

It was because you were *not* changed. It never entered my mind that the Roman Madonna of mine could *still* be beautiful—I thought you were another—younger—*almost* as lovely. I did not indeed think of you together at all for I supposed the vision in Italy to have long vanished—to be no more seen.—My cousin says she cannot think how it could ever have been more beautiful than it is.

Come tomorrow if you can (*not* Wednesday *any* day after that). Some strange things have just happened to me, from that other world that you first showed me had being.

Ever gratefully Yours.

J Ruskin

[7] The reference in the first paragraph of the letter to Mrs. Cowper's kindness to Joan presumably is connected with the breaking, by Percy La Touche, of his engagement to Ruskin's cousin. As Letter 64 indicates, the engagement was over by March 4, 1868. Thus this letter appears to belong roughly to the same time. Also, Ruskin's reminiscence about "the Roman Madonna of mine" is picked up again in Letter 66 with "those old days in Rome."

My cousin will thankfully come on Saturday at 4.

Denmark Hill, s.

Wednesday evening
[March, 1868][8]

Dear M^rs^ Cowper

It is late, but I cannot sleep till I have answered your kind letter—and first—that this may not be said after dark thoughts—believe in the truth of everything I say, to yourself, no less than of her,—and that it gives me some comfort of heart to think that anything I *can* say to you, or still must feel about those old days in Rome—can give you some pleasure.

Now,—for that letter—of which I did not speak—for though perhaps the root of all the worst of this evil, it is in reality—out of the scope of the true question.

Remember then. I had loved Rosie since she was ten years old—I saw her first in 1858 (autumn)—I have had no thought within me—ever since—but was in some part of it hers. For months of solitude among the hills—I have had *no other* thought. Well—at last I had my dream changed into hope —Then into certainty. I entirely trusted in her love—and in this joy I had dwelt—binding my whole soul upon it with cords of love—as to an altar—In an instant—wholly without warning came this stern—final—fearful word of death—and only resting on this strange sentence—unexplained. "There is nothing, but this frail *cannot* to separate our life and love."

Now—remember—as far as you know them—and you know not the thousandth part of them—the strains of passion I had to bear during these many years—and then this at the end! It drove me quite wild—and I had no power of thought—but was utterly stunned & broken—the wonder to me only is, how I was not struck with some fatal pang of brain. But the one thing that burnt itself into me was that

[8] The date ascribed is based on the textual reference to Lady Higginson; for her role in the complex relations between Ruskin and the La Touche family see Leon, pp. 392 ff., where, on the basis of other material there cited, it is clear that Lady Higginson was involved in the affair early in March, 1868.

she *could* not have done this unless there was some fatal bar in herself preventing the possibility of marriage.—I totally misunderstood the last part of her letter—saying that lady Higginson had helped her *through all this*—and I thought Lady Higginson was wholly in her confidence. How else *could* she have helped her—or told her what was right? Well—the one thing I wanted to know was whether this that I feared was the truth. I could not *think*—nor judge—nor stir out of my trance of pain till I knew this. For the question instantly came to me—"God knows how thankfully I could take her—by whatever law of life we were to be bound—but *if a second* time an evil report goes forth about my marriage—my power of doing good by any teaching may be lost—& lost for ever. And this was a fearful question to me—above all personal ones. It was all so solemn and dreadful that I had no thought of restrictions of word or "delicacies" of thought—all heaven was at stake on this one question.—And the substance of what I wrote was this—I cannot remember term for term.

"She says 'you love us both.' You *could* not have allowed her to write me this letter unless there had been some fatal reason—Tell it me. I cannot think—I cannot judge—for her or myself till I know—Is there incapacity of marriage?—If there be—still I will not give up hope—but the question is a fearful one whether I might not thus finally confirm the calumnies before arising out of my former history—and I am not now thinking of myself—no, nor even of Her—in dreading this,—but of the loss of such usefulness as in me—but now I *cannot* think. Answer me this—one word—Yes—or No,—by telegraph. Then I can think—Nay—do not—it would be like trusting the child's life to the iron & fire—I will wait till you can write—but tell me what she means."[9] This was the substance—of course if she had not given lady H her confidence—it would be dreadful to her. But it is not unforgiveable it seems to me—If she thinks it so—I will rend her out

[9] What Ruskin quotes here is the substance of a letter he rashly wrote to Lady Higginson, who, he thought, could elucidate what Rose had written him.

of the poor wreck of life she has left me—and never name her more.

—There were one or two other things in the letter that might hurt her, about religion—and the way she separated herself from me by using religious words when I had told her they were useless, but I do not suppose these were the hurt.

Both my mother and Joanna heard every word of the letter —They did not say "do not send it" once.

Pray answer me one word, as soon as may be—saying if this sin is in your judgment so unpardonable—And if not, surely you will say to her how cruel she has been.

For she can never redeem what she has done—now—even if she is ever mine. The suffering since that day of horror has been to me so ghastly that it can never be forgotten—scorched into the holiest—highest of what I was—with its black, eternal scar. I never so much as see a flower without a sense of treachery—in both worlds. Yes, I will come—if I may—and try to discern with you, the good and evil—as far as either, now exist—for me.

Ever gratefully Yours

J Ruskin

Stay—there was one other thing that might have offended her, if misunderstood—this, I said. "She talks of being my friend—But I should only waste away in the weary longing for her—as I *have* done in these sad past years—I *might* live, by tearing myself all awry into some lower mechanical life—But she would miss me—would not she?"

This might hurt her pride—or she might not understand the phrase of "lower" life.

Can you not write one word to her, and say if *this* † was the cause—how cruel she has been?

You may say—why did not you write to her. First, she gave me *no* means and Lady H might simply have refused to deliver the letter. And at least it would have lost a day, till the Sunday—two days altogether with possible contingency of her not choosing to reply—but—mainly, it was to spare her the pain of reply.—I knew that she had been repeatedly to Dublin to see physicians—and if what I feared

was so—I supposed this friend of her's, whose influence her mother valued so highly—would know more of the truth than she did herself. I have not told you yet half of what I had to bear, that day—I felt the whole letter so hard—selfish—religiously tyrannous—humanly weak—and false to her very words of but the day before.—"Trust in God and me" and Both failed—as it seemed—in one instant—for I had day by day all the year before prayed to Him through her words.

† This whole letter, I mean—a mere cry of stupefied pain.—I enclose the answer. You may think how I took *that.* That she should think it could all end thus! I did not believe she had ever known of its being written.

Letter 67

Denmark Hill, s.

[March, 1868][10]

Dear M^rs^ Cowper,

I was not pleased last night—but that is of no consequence. We must go on—& see & feel,—but this, it seems to me *is* of prime consequence, that each of us should determine, by our own most earnest judgment, the right way to employ the remainder of our life, and set to work steadily—desiring no knowledge more than may fit us to accomplish it. I am thinking of so many things as I write—I can do nothing but misplace and scratch out words. I must add *one* word of explanation to my wicked letter last night—(I wonder if it brought wicked spirits into the room—!) You must feel a continual kind of contradiction between my saying that I cannot bear what seems to me Rose's *not* suffering: and yet my fierce *scorn* of her saying that I wished to make her suffer with me. Look here. If she had a perhaps mortal wound—which was mortifying in her flesh—and I was tying it and found it senseless—if at last—as I came to the lips of it—she shrank—I should say—Thank God—it hurts, *then*.—So, when you show me that she is suffering, I say now—Thank God, she does.† And yet I am as far from *desiring* to give her pain, as if I was sitting by her bedside in her mortal peril—and pressing my hand on a torn wound in her breast.

Ever your affect^e^ S^t^ C.

†You know, in that letter I unbound to show you—she said, "she was only then beginning to understand what that pain was."

[10] The question of Rose's suffering which is the principal subject of this letter was introduced in Letter 64, thus connecting Letter 67 to others of this time. In the sequence it is placed after Letter 66, written late at night, because of Ruskin's reference to "my wicked letter last night."

Letter 68

Denmark Hill, s.

[March, 1868][11]

Dear Mrs Cowper

Your letter comforts me, in interpreting—but does not comfort in transferring the cause of silence to this error of mine however great, or painful to her it may have been: For it was an inevitable one. I cannot ask pardon for it.

I have done Rose *no* wrong from the hour when she entered the room a child of ten years old, to this instant. I have loved, honoured—cherished—trusted—forgiven—and all these limitlessly. For her I have borne every form of insult. For her, I have been silent in pain—for her I have laboured, & wept; for her, I have died, for my heart is dead within me. And if, now, she cannot pardon—nay, if she even counts as a sin *needing* pardon, my belief that she dared not have cast away this so great love, unless in sure knowledge of some fatal obstacle to our marriage, such as she could only have obtained by conversation with other women, (—how else could she have known how I lived with my former wife?)—if—I say, she holds *this* for a sin in me—it is I whose forgiveness would be withdrawn. The very greatness of my love would make such sin against it, infinite.

If she chooses, because I thought of her as a woman, not a child;—because I thought her so pure and holy that no knowledge could stain, nor dishonour touch her—because I believed her word of pledge to me inviolable, unless by mortal compelling of Fate—because I did *not* believe that in breaking

[11] There is good evidence for placing the letter here in the sequence. The "friend" mentioned in paragraph three of this letter is almost certainly a reference to Lady Higginson; thus the letter's opening—"Your letter comforts me, in interpreting"—suggests that Mrs. Cowper has responded to Ruskin's request in Letter 66 for an interpretation of the effect on Rose of his confiding letter to Lady Higginson.

that pledge, she could have been comforted by any friend who did not know the reason of her doing so,—but was advising her to baseness of falsehood in the name of Religion —If for *these* sins against her, she rejects my love—Be it so. But I do not believe it; nor will you, when you are able to measure this thing with your now perfect knowledge of it. I have never rejected *her*. She, without mercy—without appeal —without a moment of pause, rejected *me*. And now—I will take her—for Wife—for Child,—for Queen—for any Shape of fellow-spirit that her soul can wear, if she will be loyal to me with her love.

But if not—let her go her way, and stain every stone of it with my blood upon her feet, for ever. Mine will be shorter— The Night is Far Spent.

Ever faithfully Yours,

J Ruskin.

Letter 69

Denmark Hill, s.
14th March [1868][12]

Morning—(I've been sketching the dawn on the back of your letter—)

—It was not *I* who went to a "Stranger"—It was she—who in my worst agony—left me only a Stranger to speak to—and refused to receive my words herself.—Who chose *that* time—of all times to tell me that a Stranger said "she belonged to *her*."

—No—dear lady—*I* have not sinned against Rose. And it ought—if she is noble—to be the greatest joy she can now feel to know that the Sin was her's—not mine. Both of us innocent in purpose—but the actual fact of wrong—her's—the actual falsehood—hers—the resolved infliction of sorrow—her's—the dishonouring thought of her lover—her's—*I* not believing it, till now, possible she could have known of that letter's being written—believing all were guilty—except she.

—No—φιλη—I have not sinned against Rose.

S[t] C.

[12] The reference in the second paragraph to a "Stranger," i.e., Lady Higginson, places the time of writing in the year ascribed.

Letter 70

Denmark Hill, S.

15th March. 1868
(Emily's birthday)

My dear Mrs Cowper

I have heard thankfully from Joanna, the substance of your conversation yesterday, and I wholly feel the truth—or probability of all that you thought. And surely therefore, it would be now right for you to say to Rose that she had been mistaken and cruel,—and knew not what she was still doing,—that she owed it to me in strictest duty to put an end to this torture of doubt—one way or another: and that she *could* only do so by determining in calm and patient thought—with full understanding of all things, what was right for us both,—she at present knowing hardly anything certainly of herself—and nothing of me, except through mists of broken words & thoughts. I *would* write to the mother—in all gentleness, if it would be of the least avail, but be assured it would not.

And, so far from being unwilling to receive Rose in the way she wished—I should rejoice in it wholly, for my part. But every human creature has hissed and shrieked at me, for—as they said—not knowing the nature of girls, and making my former wife miserable, by this very thing—But I will face the world for her—if she will so trust me.—If she will not—she has destroyed my life.—There is no need for her decision yet —let her forget her past anger like a dream—let her be faithful to the pledge she gave me—and let her write to me, as she used to do—that we may know each others' hearts again.

The law which only gives her liberty of action in a year—is a merely human one. She is as much bound to obey her parents, in all lawful things not injuring others, after she is twenty one, as before—And she is as much bound to disobey her parents—if they command her to commit injury to others, *now,* as she would be then. It seems to me that a firm expres-

sion on your part to her and to the parents, of the wrong you now know to have been done to me, would enable her to write to me—or to you about me;—Things cannot go on as they are,—and they have already gone on, thus, too long.

For the appointment which M^{r} Cowper was so kind as to make for me I will hold myself at your command *any* evening, this following week. Tell me the hour, and evening; and I will be at the door in Marlborough S^{t}, waiting for you.

Every gratefully Yours,

J Ruskin.

Letter 71

Denmark Hill, s.

21st March. 1868

My dear φιλη,

I was much comforted by your letter to Joanna last night.

Nor was I disappointed—(far from this) the night before. My chief surprise was at myself, in not being more impressed by a sensible miracle; I *am* impressed however in a deep and helpful way, though not as I should have imagined of myself. On the other hand, there is much to surprise me sadly;—as you feel without my saying.—To any degree of humbleness of mankind I could stoop to be taught—(nay, beneath mankind) —I could gladly be taught by the most illiterate peasant—if simple and noble of heart—gladly by an animal—if God gave it voice—by the Ass-colt—by a bird—a worm—by the crying out of stones—But I can't be taught submissively—by Mr C. nor even by Spirits who don't know the make of a pigeons beak—and draw it halfway between a Parrot's and Vulture's.— The Saints forbid that Professor Owen should meet with such.

We must go again—please—& see and hear more—I was very happy in my dear little lambie's messages—though I do think that the Spirits need'nt spoil her, like every body else. For the few words from that other Spirit that came in your last night's letter—I am thankful—but I want you yourself to feel more distinctly the Law of Justice and of plain sense—by which she—as all others—is bound to test herself. As soon as you feel it strongly—you will be able to impress her with it also,—it is only by holding to it that you can even test these miracles whether they are indeed of God or of His enemies.— For instance—Rosie going out one day in the rain, comes home in a cab through Grosvenor Sq. and under her own stately two-pillared portico—gives the Cabman sixpence. The Cabman swears at her—or at least within himself—(I hope not

even under such provocation would any English cabman blaspheme at *her*)—and goes away in by no means an improved state of mind. Now Rosie has not the slightest business— hereupon, to comfort herself with the Idea that God, through that Affliction, may be dealing beneficially with the Cabman's mind, and giving it six-penny-worth of holy discipline. Her business is wholly and solely, with her own mistake and stupidity. Similarly when she breaks her word to me on Christmas day—and after ten years of my waiting and weary love—dismisses me by the word of a Stranger, she has no business to write to you—nor ought you to allow her to do so—about the possibly beneficial effects on my mind.

She has nothing whatever to do with God's dealings with my mind. She ought to know—or to be told—and convinced that she has done (through false teaching and her own constant dwelling on her own sensations instead of other people's,) —an ineffably false and cruel deed—and that she has to repent of it—and undo it—as soon as may be. What the effect on my mind actually has been—if she cares to know it—is this —that my ideal of womanhood is destroyed—and irrecoverably—that my love and tenderness to all men is greatly deadened—my own personal happiness in *any* love—destroyed —my faculties gravely injured—so that I cannot now command my thoughts except in a broken way—and such a bitterness mixed with my love for her, that though it is greater than ever—and possesses me more fatally than ever—it is partly poisoned love, mixed with distrust and scorn—and even if she comes to me now—whatever she may be to me hereafter —though she were Portia & Virgilia in one—I should and shall —always say "She has cost me too dear." That is the effect on the Cabman's mind.

Denmark Hill, s.
Sunday. 29th March. 1868.

My dear φιλη

I will bring you back the letter, which indeed it was well that I should see—on Tuesday Evening. I will not say anything respecting it, except that the actual words to which she refers—(taking their sense on report from an evening—!) were these "Her sin is tenfold greater than Percy's,[13] because she has betrayed a greater Love." I did not say tenfold greater, for fear of paining Joanna too much.

I am still—nay—I am more than ever of the mind I first held, that you ought to write to the father refusing to correspond farther with her under your present pledge, while her lover and your friend is misrepresented to her: but in this I wholly defer to your judgment your wish—and your care for her in her sorrow. I myself shall simply persevere in the course I had adopted of absolute silence to all my friends, and withdrawal from all my usually helpful labour—until she writes to me in kindness.

And let time and the Lord of—more than Time—judge for us both.

Ever your affect.e S^{t} C.

[13] Who, it should be remembered, had broken his engagement to Joan Agnew.

Letter 73

Denmark Hill, s.
Monday 30th March [1868][14]

My dear φιλη,

I will bring you back the letter tomorrow evening,—yes, it was well that I should see it, but I wish you had a little more capacity of Indignation. Cannot you say one word against this insolent habit of her's, of constituting herself judge of all things and all men?—Can you not at least point out to her the fearful wrong of listening to reports of my words, when she is not allowed to hear the words themselves; —or ask her how she dared to break her promise of writing on Christmas day—and break it in anger!

If you care to know what my words were—(and are—and will be)—these "Her sin is tenfold greater than Percy's, because she has betrayed a tenfold greater love."—(a "greater" I said—only, to Joanna, for fear of paining her.)—Of course I know she meant to do right. But theft—and murder—and betrayal of true love—are Sins positive, at whose-soever command committed—and under whatsoever conviction. And the baseness of her thought of me that *I* wished to give her pain, because I was in pain myself—is—You know you never take any notice of what I say in my letters, but—does the child really suppose—*is* she *mad* enough to suppose—that I would have been silent all this time, as I have been, unless to avoid hurting her in her phase of grief?

However, I trust you wholly with her—do what is helpful to her—and I will abide my hour—steadily following out this law that I have set to myself—and remaining silent to all other creatures, until she writes to me to be forgiven. And let Time and the Lord of more than time, do, and judge for me.

[14] The closeness in phrasing and subject matter of this letter to Letter 72 determines the year ascribed.

It is strange that I never seem to be able to make you feel that I laid my life in her hands, and she threw it to the dogs by the hand of a Stranger,—and it is not by *her* mercy that I live, this day, but by what poor strength I had, left wholly helpless and desolate. And then her quite horrible cruelty to Joanna!—Of course I know her worth and power, and the difference between the faults of her noble ignorance of what she ought to do—and those of Percy's ignoble carelessness as to whether he does it or not. But alas, the words of all her family have been always fair, and their deeds always cruel, (unless when they were excited by the presence of some minor object of pity). She says she will always love me, with her child-love. Let her see me then as a child, & speak to me, & be with me, and I will live for such love as she can give me. But she need not think to reverse God's law & make it good for man to be alone.

Ever your affect^e^. S^t^ C.

Letter 74

Denmark Hill, s.
[Late March–early April, 1868][15]

There *is* of course—a good in all this, with which *she* has nothing to do—I *am* stronger—(as a glacier is stronger than a stream—) wiser—and keener; nerved for necessary *Refusal* of kindnesses—where I used to be weakly kind—and far better able to write the history of Flint. That my hair is grey, & foot infirm, I think we must set down as dead loss.

I wrote yesterday to those of my friends who knew—or might be permitted to know anything of this matter, to say that I would henceforward write no word to any creature, (my mother, Joanna, & you, being excepted of course—though not nominally)—until my mistress wrote to me again,—nor then—unless she wrote as mine, one way or another. That words of absolute business to strangers—must of course still be sometimes written—and what I can helpfully say with my lips—I will in due time. I shall at present, at least—get the good of Rest.

Ever, dear φιλη—your affectionate S[t] C.

[15] In light of the "I would henceforward write no word to any creature" that appears in the second paragraph of this fragment, echoing as it does the words "absolute silence to all my friends" of Letter 72 and "remaining silent to all other creatures" in Letter 73, this conjectural date seems reasonable.

Letter 75

Denmark Hill, s.

30th April. [1868][16]

Oh, φιλη—φιλη—I have a letter from her—saying—"Say what you will to me"—

Be thankful for me—and pray that God may make me worthy of her always—and able to be her peace.

Ever your affecte St C.

[16] This pathetic note is coincident with an entry of May 4, 1868 (*Diaries*, II, 647) which consists of the one word "Peace." It is the time when the relations between Ruskin and Rose were temporarily restored, as both diary entries and letters to Mrs. Cowper indicate.

Letter 76

Denmark Hill, s.

4th May [1868][17]

My dearest φιλη,

She is mine, and nothing can come between us any more, unless, in some future day, she is surprised by the love she yet knows not of, for another, and if that should be, I will surrender her—in peace of heart—as I shall know that God bids me.

But now, He has given her to me, and except by His word of Love, or Death, we cannot be separated more.

Ever your loving St C.

[17] See the note to Letter 75 for the year attributed to this letter.

Letter 77

Denmark Hill, s.

6th May. 1868

My dear φιλη

I had another lovely letter yesterday, but terribly difficult to answer—for she keeps blaming me for not having trusted her—and I can't tell her what the mother was writing of her—nor show her in the least, even the direction of all the real wrong—nor can I ever do so, as you know. But without speaking of me, when you write to her, try to make her more humble, in the real vital sense—try to make her believe in the possibility of her having been wrong, even when she most desired to be right—and please also suggest to her that what people say of the guidance of men by the wisdom of maidens, does not in every word apply to maidens who are never allowed to speak to their lovers,—and who have the misfortune to have lovers of fifty when they are just out of their teens.

—The agony they have made the poor little dear thing suffer, too!—and she keeps telling me how much they love her!

I have written a perhaps somewhat too grave and cold answer†—saying that I can never discuss the conduct of her

† I have made her despise me a little in her heart, by my former utter humility of love—so that the position now is one of extreme difficulty when there is a real need of her trust in me, and distrust of herself.

Here are two letters which Joanna has given me out of my Cumberland ones—She had *so much* to say to you last night—at bed time. I sent her to bed authoritatively, instead, and said you should forgive her.

—In looking at these letters again, I am partly happy again—but it is all so impenetrable—(—except out of those low cottage windows!)

—Ever your grateful St C.

parents with her, and that for the present she has no business to think of any serious matters—but merely to rest in my quiet & constant love—and to get well as fast as she can. But what the mother is capable of doing when she comes home—I don't know—under the shame of knowing that Joanna & I now know what she *has* done. If you see her, as she will most likely have heard how things are—soothe her as much as you can—and as unconsciously as possible—saying that I will never take her daughters affection from her—if she will only give up plaguing us—and I don't mean to press for marriage in the least.—If they had but the common sense to let us alone!—Perhaps Rosie and I might quarrel to their perfect satisfaction—on a point of divinity—before a month was out!

Letter 78

Winnington Hall
Northwich
6th May. 68[18]

My dear φιλη

I have been thinking—often & often, with a little low laugh, of what the critics would call my contradiction of myself, in my two last letters,—one, saying of Rosie that nothing can ever come between us more, and the other, that we might quarrel perfectly before a month was out, over a point of Divinity. But you know, there's no contradiction. The one means that we shall never more doubt each other—shall always love,—the other—that she might resolve in the most resolute manner never to be my wife—if I did'nt believe on her authority that six & two were seven. I am more and more amused—more and more saddened, as I read and re-read her last letter; It is in one light, so exquisitely presumptuous and foolish—in another, so royally calm and divine. The utter freedom from the consciousness of any wilful sin, all her life, and of her continual faith in her present God, makes her the most glorious little angel, and the most impertinent little monkey, that ever tormented true lover's or foolish old friend's heart. I can no more talk to her than I could to a faun or a peewit;—but the white Doe of Rylstone or the Dove of the ark could'nt be more divine [a] messenger, or more to be revered in their narrow natures. What shall I do with her? I can't reason with her—or she would have a headache—I can't tell her she's a little goose—because she does'nt know the difference between that and anything else. I can't let her go on lecturing me as if she were the Archangel Michael and the Blessed Virgin in one—because flesh & blood won't stand it, and I

[18] Although this letter is written from Winnington and Letter 77 of the same date is written from London, there is no reason to doubt the correctness of the date for both letters since Ruskin went from London to Winnington on May 6 (see *Diaries*, II, 647).

can't show her that I don't need to be lectured—because—I should then have to show her that Papa and Mama *do*.—What *am* I to do with her?—Send me a little line here, tomorrow please. It's the ethics of the dust school,[19]—and—believe me or not as you will—it's in this wholly ideal state at this moment, that the two prettiest girls in it are the ablest, & the best!—Now—is anything in Utopia impossible after that?

Love to William—Have you told him about the cottage, yet?

Ever your affect^e^. S^t^ C.

[19] Winnington Hall in Cheshire was the setting for *The Ethics of the Dust*, a series of dialogues between Ruskin and some of the pupils there. Ruskin himself gives the best account of the significance of this work in the Preface to the first edition (*Works*, XVIII, 201-2).

4. Merrion Sq. S.[20]
Dublin

[May 13, 1868] [21]

Dear Mrs Cowper

This morning, I receive these few words.

"I am forbidden by my father and mother to write to you, or receive a letter.

Rose."

(*Two* rose-leaves enclosed.) One larger than the other.

Now, I hope at last you *will* have some capacity of indignation? and power of expressing it to the right person.

In the meantime I shall be quite still, and do no mischief, till I have your counsel and help. Write here, quickly. The letter of mine to which this of hers *ought* to have been an answer has, (I hope) put the child at rest as far as regards her thoughts of me—being simply what you wished me to have answered to her first letter of all, do you remember?—So that—if she has read it—all must be at rest between *us*,—but it is a question whether the mother has not got first hold of it, and merely given the child my address here out of it—but I cannot fancy Rose would allow this, (even with all her filial "piety,") after the injunction again given to me to keep all that she said sacred.

Now, will you not write firmly to the mother—warning her in some way against tormenting her child more—and saying what you begin to feel about it? Or what will you do?

My own purpose is to go on doing all the good I can, resuming my vow of writing to no one except words of necessity. I shall be stronger in patience now, knowing that she is not angry with me any more.

Ever your faithful St. C.

[20] The residence of one of Ruskin's Irish hosts, the Rt. Hon. Sir Joseph Napier, Bt.

[21] See Letter 80 and the entry of May 12, 1868, in the *Diaries*, II, 648, for corroboration of the date ascribed to this letter.

Letter 80

[Dublin] 14th May. 1868

My dear φιλη,

I had nearly thrown up lecture[22] and everything yesterday when that note came. However, I tried to fancy the difference between getting a note with two roseleaves in it, & getting none, and so I did my lecture as well as I could; but my voice failed me a little from heaviness of heart.

At the end of it, while I was talking to the people behind me a man came up with a rather large white paper parcel, which he said he was to give into my own hand. I took it, ungraciously, thinking it some troublesome person,—and carried it carelessly home—when at last I opened it, I found a large cluster of the Erba della Madonna, in bloom, which was always considered as *my* plant, at Harristown,—enclosed in two vineleaves and in the midst of it, two bouquets, one a rose half open, with lilies of the valley, and a sweet scented geranium leaf,—the other a pink, with lilies of the valley, and a green and white geranium leaf. This second bouquet puzzles me and confuses the message—do you think it could be meant for Joanna, or, what does the pink mean in flower-language.

I trust, by this, that she has received my letter written on Sunday safely,—though she is forbidden to answer. I hope she also would have firmness enough to let no one else read it—for unless they understood all as well as you do, they might justly blame me for it—being simply the confirmed promise to be just what she chose I should be, to her, for ever —But it is strange that if she did not show it them, the mother has so instantly succeeded in altering the father's determination again to evil.

Ever your affecte. St C.

[22] "The Mystery of Life and Its Arts" (*Works*, XVII, 145-87).

my next address over page

Care of Serjeant Armstrong. M. P.
32. Stephen's Green
Dublin.

(Miss Armstrong is my Lily of the Ethics of the dust—and hardly changed—only taller.)

Letter 81

[Dublin] 15th May [1868][23]

Dearest φιλη

I am to be carried away somewhere, today, before the English letters arrive—There *can* be nothing in yours,† (alas) but some slow plan or far off hope—with cheering word for the time: but it is sure to be one that I should have liked to answer at once—this is only to say why I do not. I could not have believed the difference it makes to me, even now when all is—in the deep of it so much more happy for me—to be cut off from the letters again—Is it a punishment for not liking to be unjustly scolded, even by her? I don't think so—it is not that I would not bear all for her, or from her—joyfully but that I do not like her to be unjust.

Ever your affect^e^. S^t^ C.

†How prettily I am chastised—for this despair—by what *was* in it—besides—! *Please,* a little line on Monday,—care of D^r^ Kennedy.[24]

1. Upper Merrion S^t^.

I have your letters—and her's. I made a pensive little petition to the young mistress of this house—Grace Napier—an "old" Winningtonian—and she thought of a later train and managed things for me—and so I have this blessed little sheet of "sunshine."

[23] The connection between this letter and Letter 80 is so close as to insure the accuracy of the year ascribed.

[24] Evory Kennedy (1806-86), M.D., J.P., one of Ireland's most distinguished medical men. Kennedy, once Master of the Rotunda Lying-in Hospital and a Deputy Lieutenant for the County of Dublin, was host to various literary men.

But—φιλη—you are *too* naughty in talking of its being "wrong" to send me this letter—and not saying a word of the great wrong. What—are these people first to let their son throw off that innocent and true girl, Joanna, as if she was a moth to be brushed out of their way—and then is the mother after winning her entire trust to go on writing lie after lie to her about Rose, and at last—to throw her away as her son did—in a single ghastly letter—and you think the authority of this woman is a sacred thing! and that the Father—who has never commanded his son to do so much truth or justice as to write to Joan to ask her pardon—who is utterly impotent to command *any good* whatever to his only Son, is *his* authority sacred to make his other child cruel to the man who loves her so that he will bear *any*thing for her? and to hurt hundreds through him—for there is not a day of my life which is not deadened in all usefulness—because Rose can't write to me. I am going to do my book on botany[25]—and every word of it will be dead and lifeless—for ever—compared to what it would have been—because this wicked woman's commands are obeyed by her husband—for whom *I* saved her—and by her child—whom she prayed me not to love—because if I did, "I should take her mother away from her." What respect of *this* sort do you find rendered to parents. They who were lovely in their lives—and in their death not divided—would you have had the one of them sit still in his place when the javelin flew past him?

Well—I am happy—enough and a thousandfold more than enough—in what she now is to be—and if I *could* compare my present feelings with those of a month back—I ought to be in heaven—but I was in such a seventh heaven four days ago, that falling back to the third is like falling to the earth. And you know her half Irish—half childish thoughtlessness of *me,* is very grievous—Her sending nothing but those few words and not saying even if she had my last letter, had very nearly made me throw up my lecture at once—not wilfully—

[25] Ruskin refers to *Proserpina* (*Works,* XXV, 187-569), which gestated in his mind for many years before appearing, in parts, between 1875 and 1886.

but for fear I should break down—I *very nearly* did, my voice failing at first terribly)—and that last letter of mine also contained such a solemn submission to her in all things that I ought to have been assured it *did* reach her hands. But I know now that all this *is* childishness only—and ignorance—not want of feeling—but I am quite sure that without any speaking of me—you might with perfect honour, say to her that she was wrong in not thinking enough of her duties to God directly—in her *own* responsibilities for the treatment of those who ought to be cared for by her. And you may certainly tell her not to overwalk or ride herself.

Ever your affect^e^ S^t^ C.

The flowers are drying beautifully—only one can't press massive rosebud and pink—so they will be withered at last into dark clusters of frankincense.

Stephens Green. [Dublin]
19th May. 1868.

Dearest φιλη

Yes, that letter was "enough" indeed. I can't say what I think of it—I will be very good. But I want to be wise as well as good for her, and I do not know how to be so,—or how to keep her from being unhappy just now—Why should anything make *her* unhappy, when her hope of love is for ever—not doubtfully and at moments—like mine—but assured and stedfast?

Yes, I am capable of all forgiveness,—but—in your sense of this—& deep religious hope—are you enough clear in your conviction of absolute wrong?—have you clearly enough yet expressed it to both the parents—? For is there any one who knows the facts—who thinks them right? John Simon, for instance said of them, after what they had done to Joanna. "They are people ignorant of all human relations."—and what I wrote to you did not refer to *Percy's* conduct—but to his mother's instantly ceasing to write to Joanna as soon as she had got them separated.

Then—how far do you mean her obedience to her parents to extend? *I* hold a child as much bound to right obedience at 22 as at 20—and as much bound to disobey in clear light of other duties, at 20 as at 22. She *is* disobedient in not casting me off altogether, and being resolved in that, she ought not to allow herself to be made miserable: I never in all my life allowed my father or mother's word to interfere in the smallest particular in which I was positive of my duty to some other person and they wished me to violate it—But, if she can be happy now, so can I be, under any law she chooses to obey.

I went sixty-five miles in an Irish car yesterday (30 and more each way—) into county Wicklow to look at a house which I wanted to get there—But it was variously unfit,—the drive was wonderful,—through wildernesses of hawthorn in bloom—and over mountain ground blazing with gorse. M[r] Napier drove us, (Sir Joseph Napier's son) singing Irish songs all the way (nearly)—and Miss Napier (another bright and good girl—one of my *first* Winningtonians—) and Joan—and Lily—joined as they could—You have not often seen, I fancy, such a little car-constellation as the three made, seen together as we walked behind them up the hills.—The air was as soft as softest summer could be. To day is bright again and Lily is going to take me to see a house which she thinks will do better, north of Dublin, and we are to have a wild ramble over the rocks. I am challenged to cross an Irish bridge—on which no one can pause!—I can cross anything that quiet certainty of hand and foot can—but this Irish impetuosity of traverse will be new to me.

It need not teaze you now to have these long letters—for you need not read—nor reply—only I like you to know—so far as you wish—what I am feeling & doing.

Ever your grateful S[t] C.

32. Stephen's Green [Dublin]
25th May. [1868][26] 12. night

My dear φιλη

I have just finished reading my psalms: Your letter reached me—and gladdened, & grieved,—so bitterly—today. I have debated often with myself whether or not to take the train to Sallins and walk round and round H.town—on the chance of meeting her on a walk. But I felt that if I succeeded, I might only give her pain, and that the coming away again would be too terrible for me. So I have been wistfully staying, within twenty miles of her, climbing spurs of the Wicklow hills, and looking across the plain—to where she was. To-morrow, the sea will be between us again—and I shall be very dead-hearted. But I am soon coming back to Ireland, to stay with Froude in Kerry, and indeed I hope to be often there (The people are so nice.)—and—if she wishes it to live there. I mean to keep as near her now always as I can.

I hear very grave things of Mrs La Touche: which throw light—(fire-light of the city of Dis)—on all her ways. It may be right for you to keep silence, but never to send her your love. The main thing however is to be of what help may be possible, to the child—in that of course I can only thank and revere you.

I was up early and have been talking all day at a lovely place[27] of Dr Kennedy's, with his very dear and good family—I planted a Deodara on their lawn this afternoon—his grandson, the little Sir Henry Lawrence 3 years old, helping me with tiny spade—the widowed—and but lately motherless—

[26] Along with the references to people and places in Dublin, the planting mentioned in the third paragraph of this letter, which coincides with an entry for May 25, 1868, in *Diaries*, II, 649, establishes the year the letter was written.

[27] His country seat, Belgard Castle, Clondalkin, County Dublin.

lady Lawrence[28] standing (with Joan beside her)—holding the tree—her little sister—almost too thoughtfully featured for a child of eleven—but beautiful, watching her tiny nephew at his work with sparkling eyes; and two elder sisters—and Grace Napier—Sir Joseph's daughter, an old Winningtonian—and her brother, completing the group—with sea and Wicklow hills behind, in fairest sunshine. I'm tired now (if it were not for my letter from Curzon S^{t}—) and must sleep—and dream—This is my last letter written from Ireland—this time—(no right paper or envelopes any where.). Ever your grateful S^{t} C.

Winnington Hall Northwich—finds me till Saturday.

[28] Lady Lawrence, one of Dr. Kennedy's daughters, married her cousin, Sir Alexander Lawrence. She was widowed very early in her marriage when a bridge over a ravine gave way as she and her husband rode across. (See *Irish Times,* March 15, 1928.)

Letter 84

Denmark Hill, s.
Monday morning [early June, 1868][29]

My dear Mrs Cowper

You know, without doubt by this time that all is over:—and perhaps you will not even read this note.

It is only to say that now, the only thing possible to me is to persevere in all that I have been endeavouring to do. I cannot measure what I may have to endure, nor what those who have loved me (—they are many—) may suffer for me. But I know now that this thing, whatever it is, has been openly against me from the year 1854 till now; and as I had partly lived it down—I believe in the end—that through all this evil—what I know there is of good in me will yet have some office upon the earth.

Of all things hateful, expressions of repentance, on discovered sin—are to me the most so.

What I was, and what I am—can in no wise be altered—now,—if repentance *is* in me—it has been long ago past—so far as it can ever cease—but in death.

There is so much dependent upon me that I believe strength will be given me to bear, and to do, what I must. If you believe enough in me to desire to understand me—in the darkness as in the light—first consider whether if the worst things that men ever had done in their lives were all laid *utterly bare*—how all would be likely to stand. I know there are multitudes wholly sinless and pure. But I know also, that such as I am, I stand next to these, and above the mass. It is no time to say this however, but whatever you are to know of me—you shall.

[29] The tone of this letter and its allusion to Ruskin's marital problems of 1854 and to the rumors of his sexual "abnormalities" suggest a connection with Letter 85, in which the same theme recurs with equal intensity.

You will not mistake the tone of this letter for sullenness or defiance of the world,—or for insensitiveness.

But, from moment to moment I must simply try to live on, and not to think.

I believe you will never, in the end of life—look back to any part of your own dealings with human creatures more joyfully than on your having been merciful to me just now.

Ever gratefully Yours,
J Ruskin.

Letter 85

Denmark Hill, s.

2nd June. 1868.

Dear Mrs Cowper

Her words are fearful—I can only imagine one meaning to them—which I will meet at once—come of it what may. Have I not often told you that I was another Rousseau?—except in this—that the end of my life will be the best—has been—already—not best only—but redeemed from the evil that was its death. But, long before I knew her, I was, what she and you always have believed me to be: & I am—and shall be—worthy of her. No man, living, could more purely love—more intensely honour. She will find me—if she comes to me—all that she has thought. She will save me *only* from sorrow—from Sin I am saved already—though every day that I love her, I deserve her more, in all that she conceives of me—or has conceived. But it was not so always. There was that in my early life which is indeed past as the night.—I care not what she has seen—the worst of me she shall utterly know—but—let her also hear and know the best—There is more depending on her knowing me— than her fate—or mine.

Therefore, now, insist upon knowing what has been shown her. Or perhaps at once—even from what I have said—you will tell her to forget me.

I could say much against this: but a bad man could say it also, and I will not—But of all thoughts, think but this for me—Could a bad man have loved her—as I have loved? You saw the "Resurrection face"—Was that false think you—? *Could* it be?

Is it possible that she also could have loved me, as she loves, if this had been the end meant by all its sanctity.—It cannot be. Tell her—will you not—to make one effort more—to trust—not me—but her own heart. And there yet may be light.

It is a fearful day, this; I have just heard of an intense evil which has befallen—a very—very dear friend.[30]

Whatever you do—or judge—I shall never dishonour the love she has given me—even by despair—Whatever comes—I will bear it—as I may have strength.—I cannot write more.

J Ruskin.

[30] Although the phrasing seems a trifle odd, it is possible that Ruskin refers here to the death—en route from Mauritius to England—of Rose's sister Emily (known as Wisie). She was, as noted in Letter 48, note 33, the wife of Bernard Ward. Her death occurred on June 1, 1868, and, in the entry of that date in *Diaries*, II, 649, Ruskin so records it. Most unfortunately, it is annotated there as the death of Ruskin's dog, for he once owned a pet of that name.

Letter 86

Denmark Hill, s.

11th June. 1868.

Dear Mrs Cowper

I have no right to speak of feelings, now: but Joanna will write to you, & say what *she* feels. And you shall not—for this your great kindness to me, be encumbered with the wreck of me—I will fight my way alone,—only—if anything occurs farther to make you think worse of me—if the cry against me becomes unendurable—think that the last words that dead Emily said to Joanna—were—"my dearest love to St C"—and write to me yet once more & let me answer.

I have been thinking that it would be well to seal Emily's and R's letters now, together, & leave all in your charge, so that R may see they are all safe before destroying them.

Ever gratefully yours. St C.

Letter 87

Denmark Hill, s.

16th June. [1868][31]

Dear Mrs Cowper,

It is rather difficult work to keep living just now, and I must not be beaten, for many people's sakes,—if I can help it. Therefore, I must keep Joanna cheerful as long as I can. You may think it cowardly of me. I believe it is not,—what it is—or what I am, time will assuredly show. For the present—leave Joanna, when you see her tomorrow—what poor hope she has. She will tell you that *I* have none,—and what I shall try to do.

—Decline to show her R's letters: you can—(truly, without doubt)—say that they are harsh, & would only for the present give pain to her. I have told her nothing but that the influence of the M.s[32] has been brought upon R. You can say that it all hurts you too much to be long spoken of,—comfort poor little Joanna in any general tender way—such as you know so well, and then let her talk to you of Emily & what else is in her heart.

I cannot believe that the powers of giving happiness, and of insight into natural and beautiful things, which are in me—have been given me to be quenched thus. You may wonder at me—but I can *sleep—well*—and long. The difficulty is in the looking.

I shall have things to say, perhaps—some day—not now.

Ever gratefully Yours. St C.

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[31] The textual reference to Joan's sorrow over Emily La Touche Ward, who, as already noted, died June 1, 1868, suggests the year ascribed.

[32] Probably a reference to John and Effie Millais. For a discussion of the role played in the Ruskin-Rose tragedy by Ruskin's former wife and her husband, the celebrated painter, see the introduction to Part IV of this correspondence.

Letter 88

Denmark Hill, s.

25th June. 1868.

Dear Mrs Cowper.

I have only not sent to ask for you, in order not to give you trouble—fearing you would think it in your kindness, necessary to write.

I believe you will like to know sometimes what I am doing, —so I will tell you—not expecting you ever to answer—because it will always be painful to you to think of me, for some time.

I am working chiefly at my botany for I have much material which it would be wrong to waste—(—only it is so very strange to work at it now—when one always shudders if one comes across a particular family of flowers—that one had meant to trace all down from—).

Did you ever read Hood's poems?—do you recollect poor Peggy and her nosegays?[33] Then I've gone back to my Egyptian and other out of the way work—and it won't be done worse, in some ways, for being done with no distraction except pain. Could you fancy my conceiving such a thing as that in some ways—even This—should be—for the Best? —And you know—*I* only mean—Best For "To-day." Not for Tomorrow.

Ever gratefully yours,
St C.

[33] From "Miss Kilmansegg and Her Precious Leg," lines 116-18 ("Poor Peggy hawks nosegays from street to street / Till—think of that, who find life so sweet!— / She hates the smell of roses!").

Letter 89

Denmark Hill, s.

11th July. 1868

My dear Mrs Cowper

Joanna came home *so* happy—with a bright sense of having been useful—and a deep one of having been petted and cherished to her very hearts best content. I am very grateful to you.—For other & deeper kindness to myself, much more than grateful.—I am getting on strangely well. Just after I had got into some calm & patience, and had resolved to take—and do —what was sent me—there came various calls back to my political work, which have given me much to think of—and, what I most needed, some returning sense of power—and everything seems at present to move well under my hand, (of my own work:) and by steadily hindering myself from thinking of anything else, I seem to get stronger daily.

I knew the meaning of the fable of the Sirens before, but I did not know what shapes they could take, nor that their song could seem so sacred.—But of the best—as of all beneath it—the deadly—or deadliest thing is not the Loss—but the Coveting. The dim sight is misery—blind, one can be at rest. However—I cannot reason of it—one thing I know—that I must neither fail others—nor—in the uttermost sense—fail to her—it will take many a day—but she will know at last that her love was not given wrongly—nor those flowers carried by friends.

—Don't think slightly of me for being so well.—If *you* had not stood by me, I believe I should have gone down—it just gave me breath & life enough, to hold on till the wave past. I don't think you'll be sorry, as time seals all.

Ever your grateful St C.

Letter 90

Denmark Hill, s.

19th July. 1868.

Dear Mrs Cowper

I cannot understand in the least—though I have *perfect* faith in—that lovely humility of yours. Few women in this world can ever have had more influence for good—or can have used it more constantly. Perhaps it could not have been so helpful—but for the unconsciousness—but the unconsciousness is not the less mysterious for its beauty. You never can know—nor can I—what you have done for me—for we cannot say what would have happened, most probably, if you had not strengthened me. I should have dashed away to the hills—Greek or Calabrian—or strange—and there fallen sick and passed away—and, as it is—I am in a kind of rest—with clearer sight & purpose than I ever had before.

I have been writing to William—*he* sent me such a kind letter, too. Whenever you *wish* me to come, I will come to you now—& will give you no more trouble of any kind—only I must be quite sure that you don't let me in when you are tired merely in kindness to me. I think to put me at ease—you must not be at home to me—twice—at least—to begin with.

My mother is very happy in your message to her—Joanna—at her happiest. I am tired to day—and there is so much I want to say, only I want to say it prettily too—and I can't.

—Did I show you that lovely 15th century engraving of "Astrologia"—when you were last here? I was casting my horoscope the other day!—and the first sentence of the stars—was—"innumerable troubles." The second—"Noble and faithful female friends."—And truly I have—and have had—such—but none of them yet—to whom I have been so burdensome, or by whom I have been aided—as by you. But the one that

died at Neuchatel[34]—and her sister[35]—(who wrote for me to R—and conquered her for the time)—and poor little Joan —are all very dear,—and then there is the sense yet of having *been* cared for so long and truly: and that I have the faith to keep to that past.

—I don't think I shall be changed into flint—yet.

Every your grateful
"Coz"

[34] Lady Trevelyan. See Letter 35.

[35] Miss Jermyn, daughter of the Rev. H. W. Jermyn.

Letter 91

Denmark Hill, S. E.

30th Nov. 1868.

My dear φιλη,

As soon as I came back from France I saw what new grief[36] had fallen on you—and I would have written if any word of comfort had been in me—but you know I never have any comfort. I can help, sometimes when help is still possible—but not console. I only receive help and comfort always from you and can give none. What you tell me of lady Adine is now very lovely, and, there are those who would die glad for two such years,—but the fields and woods of Panshanger must be strangely desolate.

Not so desolate as all fields—& woods, in the autumn that has no hope of spring, look sometimes. But you need never fear disturbing or harming *me* when you can tell anything to Joan that will make her happy: First—because I am never for an instant free from one presence—and am obliged to be what I can be, and do what I can do—in a tranquillity of eternal pain—and yet more—because the bitterest part of all that pain—not the heaviest or greatest of course—but the piece of it I am least able to bear, is the seeing poor little Joanna suffer so much—all through me—*there*—at least, is sorrow which has not been deserved—and it is so pure—!—she evidently now suffers only—and always, for the loss of R.—and the other love was nothing in comparison.

I know if you will answer—if you can answer at all that question, in true understanding of me—I have been able to live through this, and it is in a sense—well with me—because it is all I can now do for her to make her not ashamed of having been loved by me—yes—and for the sake of others—many others—I must be all I can, while I yet live.

[36] The death of William Cowper's niece, Lady Adine Fane, who, in 1866, had married Julian Fane, fourth son of Lord Westmoreland.

I worked hard during my two months at Abbeville[37]—staying there, not going on to Verona, because I found the church there was to be destroyed this coming winter. I drew—for the first time in my life—as well as I could—and people like what I have done, & it will be of some value.† I had my dear American friend, Charles Norton with me, some days, & went to Paris with him and met Longfellow there—and Longfellow came and spent the evening with us at Meurices[38]—just under the room where I got the letter in 1862 saying I was not to have the house at H.town—and I was thinking of Elsie's prayer all the time—but Longfellow liked me. I will show you a letter I had from him since.—Now—here I have been forced into this committee for employment of destitute poor—and I've been useful there already,—I find—in trying for the first time to be of use in public business that the *upper* and outmost feelings of people are often quite base & mean, & if one fights them, arise into a mere fringe of fiery little dragons, impassable,—but if one never heeds them—and appeals to the inner feeling—there is no end of generosity and sure goodness down beneath—more than the people have the least notion of themselves. I had a fight the other day against some private interests—and after saying what I could gently, went away & left it to the men themselves & they did what I wanted as soon as I was gone! Ever your affectionate & grateful, S[t] C.

† Your island shall be done next spring, at Venier—if I am well.

[37] From which he returned on October 21, 1868.

[38] The Hôtel Meurice, where Ruskin customarily stayed when in Paris. Ruskin and Longfellow seem to have got along well together, both in 1868 (see *Works*, XXXVI, 556) and in 1869 (see Letter 109).

Letter 92

Denmark Hill, S. E.
1st December. [1868][39]

My dear φιλη

I find I can certainly come on Saturday—heaven permitting,—or its contrary not hindering—which is the practical way of the world's transactions—mostly.

Those verses are very beautiful,—(and they have taken a weight of bitterness out of my heart beyond all words—)—but if—from your own feeling & judgment, you could tell her to think no more of anything that no more—I mean—of herself or of any one whom she cannot help—but instantly to set her mind on ascertaining what direct and material good she can do, by influence or act—round about the Shelburne Hotel—(*it is in the centre of as much misery—redeemable at once* by only a little human justice & love as ever cried out from the dust to God)—she would recover health—& show mercy—not to *them* only.

Ever your grateful S[t] C

[39] On Saturday, December 5, 1868, Ruskin went to Broadlands (*Diaries*, II, 662); this brief letter very likely refers to that visit.

Letter 93

Denmark Hill, S. E.

3rd December 68.

My dear φιλη

It will be a great pleasure to me to bring my cousin with me. Her simple & constant power of enjoying everything—and her true & deep gratitude for the kindness you have shown her, will I hope give you also some pleasure. We shall come by the afternoon train on Saturday—arriving at Romsey (I believe) at 5.30.

Every gratefully Yours,

JR.

Letter 94

Denmark Hill, S.E.
8th December [1868][40]

My dear φιλη

We got home *so* comfortably and both of us happy—Joanna limitlessly; and I, strangely and with return of some feelings of rest which I thought were never to return.—I always felt that William and you were kind to me—but I never felt till *this* time—sure that you liked me, and that I could sometimes be—kind to you!—It is very wonderful and peacegiving to me to feel this. I do not wish now that I had been wrecked on Boulogne sands—but will live—on my own sand-island—and watch the sun go down and you shall be my "Madonna dell' Acqua."

—I have your book—*so* safe (I never quitted my square casket of treasure all the way)—and will bring it to Curzon St[t]—it will be the first time I shall have been at the door since —Times and Times. And I have put the little geranium *leaf* —(The *Flower* knew it was not for me & fell) with some other geranium leaves you know of.

My mother is very grateful to you. She likes so much to hear of you, & of lady Palmerston—it was so very very sweet of lady Palmerston to be so kind to Joanna.

With both our loves to her, & to you & William.

Ever your faithful St[t] C.

[40] In view of Letters 92 and 93, the year here ascribed would appear to be the correct one.

Letter 95

Denmark Hill, S. E.

12th Dec. 68

My dearest φιλη

Poor little Joan came to me in great sorrow just now, which I hope I have put far from her—first by making her tell it me all—secondly by asking her to think of it as a trial sent absolutely without fault of hers, of yours, or of Rose's: and therefore—*if* any trials are for good—to be met as coming from the Grace of god—not at all to be thought of as anything fatal or final—so far as regards any of you three,—and as it regards me—(the chief pain I have being that I must cause all this to all of you)—you are not to think of me but so far as I can help or give you pleasure—so only that you do not—I am sure you never will—think of me as having loved—or loving—less, because I am able to forget love for love's own sake—no—of all things not that— but to seal the stone of its sepulchre—and look for no light of morning—and yet be at peace—so long as I have some still to love me and to be lived for,—and many whom I can help.

And don't be vexed for Joan—I will soon make her happy again—and we will come to dine on Monday—and I'll bring some pretty things and William shall cut them into little pieces —and you and Joan shall heal them again—and then William won't be so cruel any more.—And for you—& Rose—you have better writing to each other in your hearts than any that anger can make cease—so I will not be sorry for you. And the Time is not Yet.

—And so be happy & know how deeply I am to William & you

Your faithful St C.

Letter 96

Denmark Hill, S.E.
Monday [December 14, 1868][41]

My dear φιλη

I have a heavy cold upon me; but will come nevertheless if I can at all stir or speak. I will bring Joan with me, she would be too much tantalized if I did not—and my mother will kindly spare us both for the evening. I shall be greatly interested by hearing of M[r] Oliphant's society in the west.[42] If we can get a border land of life, we may hope to fight out to it from our dark centre and capital city of Sorrow.

Ever affectionately Yours
J. Ruskin.

[41] The date ascribed seems correct in view of the reference to a dinner engagement in Letter 95.

[42] A reference to the community of Thomas Lake Harris that Oliphant had joined in 1867; see Letter 59, note 48.

Letter 97

Denmark Hill, s.

[1868][43]

Thanks—always, but I shall never pass through Curzon Street more—I remember too well the night last year, when I should have waited at your door—with the night beggars—to see her pass, if I had not feared to hurt her.

All that you can do for me is to tell me what you think it all means—and whether she will marry any one else. I know nothing—but that *she* is mad, and the mother a horror of iniquity—like a Lamia—only with a strange Irish ghastliness of grotesque mistake mixed with the wickedness. Fancy Jael sending polite messages to the mother of Sisera, asking how she got on with her embroidery! Her treatment of my cousin has been worse than of me—as treacherous—& *more* brutal, more—as being cruelty to a woman—and a child-woman—and not a strong one.—More—*otherwise*—had been impossible.

I am glad to hear of your being in London again. I hope your sister is better.

Yours faithfully, JR.

[43] The year ascribed is based on an allusion in the letter to Rose's London visit "last year" (in February, 1867). Letters 97 and 98 are placed at the end of 1868 because there is not sufficient evidence to indicate exactly where in the sequence they should go.

Letter 98

Denmark Hill, s.

[1868][44]

Dear Mrs Cowper,

You must write those verses for me—I should like them so—and *I* cannot write them, for I cannot feel them—I am night and day in one thirsty fever of passionate longing for the sight of her which no words or thoughts can give peace to—I was nearly coming that night she dined with you, to stand on the pavement to see her pass—and I would—only I thought it would have hurt & startled her—but I can't get over the horror of their doing such a thing to me—and then, my mothers sickbed—which is, in fact a slow—slow—deathbed—is in itself infinitely saddening to my daily life. She has so much power of enjoyment yet—and it is all vain—bound down as she is—& the mind so far weakened that all my intercourse with her is indulgent—not in any true reverent relation as it should be to one's mother and I fail fearfully in my duty to her because of my own distress. Why should I make you sad—Only—no religious words are of use to me. Rosie's thought of me is—but I believe it will all be vain—as it has been—through these weary six years.

But as soon as this evil time is past in the heaven & the four winds of it, I will ask you to come.

Ever gratefully Yours,

J Ruskin

[44] The reference to "these weary six years" and a connection with the theme of Letter 97 account for the year ascribed.

PART IV

Part IV

Letters 99 to 171

January 17, 1869—[July 27, 1871]

DURING 1869 Ruskin was busy with numerous interests and endeavors. Early in the year he lectured a good deal and in April went abroad, where he remained until the end of August. While he wrote Mrs. Cowper-Temple with some frequency, he did not request her mediation with Rose for him. He turns, in fact, to quite different subjects, commenting upon the selling of his pictures and upon his plans for resettling the Rhone valley; he expresses confidence in the work he is doing and describes a meeting in Verona with Longfellow. Upon his return to England he again demonstrates a catholicity of activities in writing his correspondent about French songs and French philology and by planning his Chaucerian scholarship; he also mentions lectures he gives, and, in a letter delineating his working methods, he offers Mrs. Cowper-Temple a preliminary sketch of *Proserpina*. Ruskin's correspondence during these months seems, on the surface, singularly revealing of the intellectual pursuits of a cultured and exceptionally gifted Victorian aesthete and man of letters.

But his correspondence is nevertheless haunted by the pitiless theme of Rose La Touche. In several letters[1] it is apparent that she is much in his thoughts. In references to color and in descriptions of the natural scene, the play upon her name is constant. And the hostility previously directed against her

[1] Letters 103 to 108, for instance.

breaks forth again as Ruskin speaks of her leaving him helpless and as he attributes cruel motives to her. He resentfully mentions the restraint, the doubt, the fear, that prevented him from writing love letters to her. Thus, even in its seemingly undisturbed stages, their relationship is ever ready to erupt.

The year 1870 commenced lamentably for Ruskin. On January 7 he accidentally met Rose—who was visiting London—at the Royal Academy; at that time he offered to return her her letter of engagement to him, a letter he carried between "golden plates"; this she refused to accept. But the meeting lacerated him emotionally at a crucial time, for he was preparing his Oxford lectures (he had been elected Slade Professor of Fine Art in August, 1869) and needed both serenity and clarity of mind. In fact, this encounter had a catalytic effect upon Ruskin, Rose's physical presence stirring him so profoundly that early in February he wrote her complaining of her treatment of him and Joan Agnew. Rose, in turn, replied by a letter of February 21[2] which she sent to Mrs. Cowper-Temple to forward at her discretion; fortunately, this document, while preserved, was never sent to Ruskin. In it Rose accuses him of ignorance of her feelings, of being without faith, and of doing her an injustice in the intended dedication to her of his Oxford lectures. What makes Rose's letter so amazing and so revealing of her mercurial temperament is that within two days she had reversed her position entirely, as one can deduce from Letter 147—written on February 23—where Ruskin joyously informs Mrs. Cowper-Temple that Rose has come back to him, that "She will not leave me any more." A partial explanation for this *volte-face* is to be found in Letter 151—written on March 20—where Ruskin clarifies the relations that have existed between Rose and himself for the past several weeks.

In the spring and summer of 1870 (from late April until late July) Ruskin toured Switzerland and Italy. But, as Letter 156 suggests, Rose was never far from his mind. That he communicated with her is seen in the *Diaries*.[3] It is likely, too, that soon after he returned to England Mrs. Cowper-Temple

[2] Leon, pp. 480-81.

[3] *Diaries*, II, 697.

sent him a picture of Rose.[4] Certainly, during this period he became sufficiently drawn once more to Rose to arouse the fury of her mother, for Mrs. La Touche, agitated by the renewal of relations and by reiterated intercessions of Mrs. Cowper-Temple, determined to separate her daughter finally from the older man. To do this she took a drastic step: in October of 1870 she turned to Effie Millais for the circumstances of her marriage to Ruskin some twenty years earlier.

Effie, sixteen years after the annulment of her first marriage, had evolved from the physically engaging if flighty young woman of the fifties into a stern disciplinarian, a true Victorian matron, encircled by a multitude of attractive children born of her union with John Everett Millais. Unwillingly drawn into the glare of Ruskin's sentient life, she responded[5] to Mrs. La Touche's inquiries with a document charged with the accumulated hostility and virulent memories of years. After a cant expression of sympathy for the difficulty confronting Mrs. La Touche, Effie deplores the "mischievous influence of Mr. Ruskin" and condemns his "present statements"[6] as "perfect falsehoods." She then annihilates whatever hopes Ruskin may have entertained toward Rose by damning his conduct as "dishonourable," "impure,' and "discreditable." She can, she remarks, excuse his behavior only "on the score of madness" and denies that their marriage was ever arranged. His mind, she notes, "is most inhuman," and "from his peculiar nature he is utterly incapable of making a woman happy." After deploring his influence over young minds, she sums up by remarking that "He is quite unnatural and in that one thing all the rest is embraced." To these vengeful words of Effie's Mrs. La Touche returned an appreciation for her candor and stated the belief that Rose was now beyond Ruskin's influence; also Rose, as a result of Effie's letter, had promised her father to have no further association with Ruskin. Neither was his name to be mentioned in the La Touche family again.

At this point, however, modern biography tends to neglect the subsequent emotional problems of 1871, problems which

[4] *Ibid.*, II, 701.

[5] James, pp. 254 ff.

[6] Regarding his sexual normalcy.

plainly—as the letters of the following part show—derive from the fiasco of the closing months of 1870. Early in 1871, as was customary when subjected to emotional stress, Ruskin threw himself into multifarious activities: the monthly installments of *Fors Clavigera*, letters to the press, lectures at Oxford. And while his letters to Mrs. Cowper-Temple decline in number, there comes, in June, a rush of communications suggestive of activities antecedent to their writing and involving his relations with the La Touche family. For, as Letters 164-67 and 169-70 show, Ruskin, by using William Cowper-Temple as an intermediary, tries to convince John La Touche that he is due another hearing by the family and that his legal position is a valid one. There are numerous references to documentary evidence pertaining to his first marriage, to the importance of the facts being placed before Rose, and to the necessity for her enlightenment regarding the "unjust evil-speaking against me." That the question of marriage was still to the fore is apparent from Letter 170 and, indeed, from the medical examination mentioned in Letter 167. These distraught letters attest to Ruskin's desperate suit and, with other domestic difficulties, are testimonials to the state of mind which induced the illness—part physical, part mental—that attacked him early in July, 1871, at Matlock.

17th Janʸ. 69

My dear φιλη

It is so very kind & nice of William & you to come tomorrow. —I think the evening will be best—(for I am always tired and giddy in the afternoon after some difficult work in diagrams I have on hand:)—It is just possible that two very good and gentle people—Mʳ Stopford Brooke[7] and his sister Honor, *might* be with us, also. I cannot prevent this—nor would I,—for they will bring no discord into our thoughts—but meet us in all that we shall care to speak of—I have no better friend than Mʳ Brooke—and I met his sister, in Ireland on the day you sent me the letter which told about the flowers—and the Madonna-herb.

Please come therefore in the evening—we dine at seven—it is not coming "to dinner"—but will be best so.

Ever your faithful Sᵗ C.

[7] Stopford Augustus Brooke (1832-1916), Anglo-Irish parson and man of letters. After a distinguished ecclesiastical career in London and elsewhere Brooke withdrew from the Church of England in 1880 when he was no longer able to believe in the doctrine of the Resurrection. He was a well-known literary critic whose *Primer of English Literature* appeared in 1876. Ruskin influenced Brooke's work noticeably.

Letter 100

Denmark Hill, S. E.
[*ca.* February 12, 1869][8]

My dear φιλη,

I cannot write to *you*—but please send me the least line to say how you are—and if I can do anything for you. I can't write—for I have no feeling. What pain may do to soften—I know not; but me it has only hardened more & more—and now—it has done its utter work with me—and I have got into a mechanical habit of common thought and material business —I hear of the most helpful things—they do not help me—of the most sad,—they do not sadden—there is no sorrow left in me for anything—and yet perhaps it might not harm you to come and tell me something about that spiritual world—which is not mine—or about the grief—which I cannot make mine. Or perhaps to speak of other things—you know that tomb study I showed you? Can Grande. It is all settled now that I put all my strength (little enough—yet worth something) into careful study of the tombs of Verona, for the Arundel Society who will engrave the drawings—with others in farther illustrations and I will do the necessary part in writing—So I throw up all other plans for this, that I may do it as well as I can,—and shall get away to Verona as soon as the days open—& live under *those tents of the dead.*

Send me just a little word—please.

Ever with love to William.

Your affectionate S[t] C.

[8] This conjectural date is based, primarily, on the textual reference to the Arundel Society, which existed from 1849-97. Ruskin received a number of commissions from this organization (see *Works,* IV, xliv-xlv), one being an examination of the tombs of Verona. Because of this Ruskin spent much of his summer tour of 1869 in Verona. And in *Diaries,* II, 664, under entry of February 12, 1869, he notes a visit to the Arundel Society which was doubtless to arrange for the studies in Verona. There are a number of entries in his diary—in May and in June, 1869—indicating the work he is doing in Verona on the tomb of Can Grande (*Diaries,* II, 669 ff.).

Denmark Hill, S. E.
4th March [1869][9]

My dear φιλη

I want William & you and Miss Tollemache[10] to come and meet Mr Stopford Brooke—but I don't know how to manage it —Can you give me a choice of two days after you return to town? and we'll do our best to deceive the adverse Stars.

Ever affectionately Yours,
J Ruskin

Will you give my faithful regards to Lady Cowper—lady Florence & lady Annabel[11] &—to Henry if he is there.

[9] Evidence for the year attributed derives from Letter 99 where Ruskin mentions a possible meeting between the Cowpers and Stopford Brooke.

[10] A sister of Mrs. Cowper.

[11] One of William Cowper's nieces.

Letter 102

Denmark Hill, S. E.
[March 5–8, 1869][12]

My dear φιλη,

It is so delightful that you can come to dinner. I want to get the Brookes to come with you—so I send first there, and I have told my servant to bring their answer, with this note to you,—please read it—and so you will be free for any other engagement on one of the days.

—Also—Would you mind coming to University College—you & William and Miss Tollemache ¼ of an hour before the time—that your Madonna's protection might be over my group of girlhood—it's a little awful taking in 4! by oneself—(I've got my Irish "Lily"[13] over for a little while)—but with Williams help it would be all right. At all events I've written to the college people to keep seven seats for me in a good part of the room, and if you could come at ¼ past eight and stay in the carriage till I come it would be very gracious of you,—but if you are necessarily late I will give orders that you shall be shown to the seats—if you will take enclosed card with you.

—Ever your grateful S[t] C.

[12] The textual reference to University College and the connection with Letter 101 suggest the possible dates for this letter. Ruskin is referring to his lecture on the "Greek Myths of Storm" given on March 9, 1869. This lecture, modified, became the first lecture of *The Queen of the Air*.

[13] Lily Armstrong.

Letter 103

Denmark Hill, S.

6th March 1869

My kind φιλη,

I will stay in all day on Friday—(and Saturday—if you cannot come on the first day.) so you can just come at your own pleasure—only I want you to have at least the last ray of daylight. Shall I have a cup of tea for you at 5—or will you come to lunch—or just in your afternoon drive? Any way it will be well for me to see you. Can you tell me anything of this "odd trouble" of your own?

I wish you would try to make my queen understand—with thoughtfulness of heart, that Hagar[14] would never have said "Thou, God, seest me," if He had dried up the well from the sand—instead of showing it; She would never have said that "God was better than the water-brooks"—until He had led her beside them. I think she feels that she has already wrought some higher & nobler thoughts in me—but she thinks it is the distress—not the hope, that has done this—and she has no conception of the degradation of the wrath in which I am compelled to live daily—because of what has been done to me.—It is even *all but* too late for even *her* to redeem me now from its darkness—these seven years of pain have so mortified the springs of life.

Ever your grateful St C.

[14] Gen. 16.

Letter 104

Denmark Hill, S. E.

17th April. 1869[15]

My dear φιλη

It is so pretty and dear of you to care about my poor pictures—but why should you think it mattered to me—*now*—what I have—or have not?—I have not—anything, more, in truth.—So long as I have working tools—and they are to be found cheaply—it does not signify to me whether I keep or lose—the Louvre.

But—my pictures *are* working tools, yet—and I'm not parting with them. Only quitting some that are useless to me to get finer. I can't afford to go on buying—so I must change worse for better—all that I have parted with I can well spare —and at one oclock today at Christie's. I've given carte blanche order for *four,* which will be more useful to me than the forty that went away yesterday. Three *very* little ones—not larger than this open sheet—but with world kingdoms in them—if one cared to be King.

The Slaver[16] is not gone—they did not come to my price—and it shall not go but worthily—I do not think less of it than I did—but I am so sick for rest that only the quiet, grey, old gentleness of leaf and sky are good for me.

Am I to see you before I leave—on the 20th?[17] It does not matter to me—I care much more for you than to care to see you, and you are always my best help—seen or unseen.

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[15] From the textual reference to the sale at Christie's it looks as if Ruskin has dated this letter incorrectly. The sale of his paintings took place on Thursday, April 15, 1869. For details see *Works,* XIII, 569 ff.

[16] Turner's "Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying" was purchased by John James Ruskin for his son in 1844. Ruskin disposed of it in the United States in 1872, and it is now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Ruskin often mentions "The Slaver" in his work; his most perceptive discussion of it appears in *Modern Painters,* Vol. I (*Works,* III, 571-73).

[17] Actually, Ruskin left April 27, 1869, for the Continent (*Diaries,* II, 667). This date of departure is corroborated by *Works,* XIX, xlvi, n. 4.

Love to William—I was so glad to see that anything that teazed him was at an end.

I've done the best I could—the very best I could—with this book[18] that chance set me upon. The wind blows where it listeth—and it seemed to me it had its call to life—of a kind—and I have obeyed—as the dust of the valley obeys. There's a word or two here and there—which only ρ[19] will understand—a little botany about leaves that grow among ruins—which people will say is fanciful—and some Darwinian notes on origin—no—on distinction—of species—lacertine[20] and others.

And so goodbye. I'll bring you your island from Venice—if the seaweed has not forsaken it, and there is still Rest of waves beside it.

Ever your grateful S^{t} C.

Joan says I may see you next week.

[18] *The Queen of the Air*, whose first edition appeared on June 22, 1869.

[19] Undoubtedly the rho is a whimsical abbreviation for "Rose."

[20] The name Lacerta—as applied to Mrs. La Touche—appears not infrequently in Ruskin's letters and diaries; its varying connotations should not be overlooked.

Letter 105

Denmark Hill, S. E.

20th April, 1869

My dear φιλη

Your letter did me all the good that anything could possibly have done.—I could not answer instantly—hoping to have freed myself from some claims that break my days—but I cannot extricate myself—and all that I may hope is that you can let me come for the hour of afternoon quiet before you go to dress for dinner on Friday or Saturday. Do not write—I must be in town both days, & will come about ½ past four on Friday & take my chance—I would come to dinner; but am in a strange dreamy state in which I can't bring myself to speak. You will have borne enough with me, in an hour.

—Also—my mother is alone now,—at least will be—then in the evenings—depending on me until I leave.—I only want to see you free and have William's hand before I go.

Ever your affecte St C.

Letter 106

Brieg. Valais
4th May, 1869

My dear φιλη,

I thought it was best, after all, that I had no goodbye—for fear I should have uselessly made you sorry to see me looking so ill, as people said I was: and I have had no heart to write till now: but there came a plan into my mind, to day, which I want you to be the first to know of.

You know I have always had a strong feeling of the possibility of subduing the miasmic and other evil influences of the great Alpine vallies[21]—redeeming their land; and their race. I never saw the Valais look so awful as it does, now, owing to the destruction caused by the floods of August, last year. And as I thought of it, all day long, in the hot sun and marsh wind, it seemed to me that here was a piece of Python-fighting as much needing to be done as ever any mythic contest; and that I knew how to begin it; and that it would lead on to the conquering of many of the worst of our modern falsely-economic stupidities.

And it seemed to me that for myself, it would at once be a sufficient fulness of purpose and being, to carry it on against all disappointment—as long as I lived, and that it would keep me from thinking of past possibilities—or present weakness or pain:—

The thing to get done is simply this—The Alpine snows at present melt in every great heat—so as to rush down in flood, & devastate the whole valley; then the rocks are left without springs—they become arid—lose their trees, & crumble into horror of ruin over the ruined plain.

[21] Ruskin's desire to reclaim a large part of the Rhone valley is frequently expressed in his correspondence about this time. See, for example, *Works*, XXXVI, 567 ff.

Now, there must be vast reservoirs made at intervals on each flank of the great ravines, i.e. A railroad embankment a mile long—curving round and enclosing a hollow in the glen-side—every five or six miles down the ravines,—and smaller reservoirs on the slopes of the hills themselves.

Then, in flood time, the streams are to be let off into these reservoirs—and in general hardly *any* of the melting snow allowed to go down to the Rhone, till the water has been thoroughly used for irrigation over the whole hillside; trenching and trenching till the now barren rocks are terraced with grass and blossoming trees to the foot of the eternal snow.

Then, where the dead-level plain is, now all poison—nothing alive but frogs and snakes, the river once subdued finally;—there is a new kingdom of precious cultivable land.

I know this can be done. And when I've been to Venice, just now, I'll come back here directly; buy a small piece of hillside;—get what help I can from English sagacity—and set to work to show what I mean. Then—if I can redeem and show certain command, over a little piece,—it will be *time* to explain, aloud, what human strength and patience can do for it all.

I don't mean to give up my drawing in the least—or my art, but to make *this* my exercise—and rest, and never think of anything else. I will get my bit of land in a healthy spot, —but half of it barren: and I will redeem it to beauty: You know—the best bit of Modern painters is of the mountain gloom and glory;[22] It was all written, or thought out, in this valley, so this is no *new* peak.

I am looking out as I write on a desolate little market place—more desolate chapel—desolatest hills above, sullen with rain, the Python gathering himself together, at me—Vain marketing—vainer prayer—Hills—to which no man lifts his eyes for—Help.

—Well, I am fifty—and cannot climb them as I could once. But, I think I can conquer them yet—and in a better way. It is so precious to me to have you to tell this to. If you had not helped me, I should never have fought more. Love to φίλος Ever your affectionate S[t] C.

[22] *Works*, VI, 384 ff.

Letter 107

Poste Restante
Verona. 22nd May. 1869

My dear φιλη,

I am very happy with your letter;—it came a day too late for Mrs Laurie—though it would only have modified a little the brevity of my helpless reply to her card that I was quite tired, and could receive and pay no visits.—For all I can do, resting all I can, between work-times, is too little and tenfold too little, for what I want here.

My days, nevertheless, gain each a little step—and the gain is sure—nothing that I do now will be useless—sometimes of course I fail in a bit of work, but I do it again and beat it, and—if I live, this is the way I shall slowly do what I can against flood—and disorganization.[23]—For I shall at once set on foot this that I have had in my mind so long, in connection with the Alpine work. I see the corruption and horror of modernism, here, at its utmost, and that it can only be met by entire rejection of its companionship and infection. I shall ask whosoever will to join—in such place and manner as they can—in a resolute effort to recover some human law and dignity of purpose, and I shall soon write out the series of laws which they must promise—to the best of their power to keep.

Of these the first will be, to do something somewhere everyday definitely and solidly serviceable—either—if they are men—digging or building or teaching assured and instantly useful truth, or if women making clothes—or cooking—or teaching and taking care of children & sick people—but above all things enforcing among themselves and the men round them laws of refined beauty in manner and thought—and

[23] This is an important letter for the light it casts on Ruskin as a social meliorist. In other letters—to Charles Eliot Norton in particular—Ruskin writes of reclaiming part of the Rhone valley.

outside dress & furniture—insisting on order and precision—formal laws of behaviour to be early taught to boys as their chief duty—and beautiful—though strong & simple dress down to the lowest dependents or poor.

Then the steady practice of music and athletic exercise *without contention.* (This very difficult—but essential if the object being to attain a given strength—not to be the strongest). Every person's income must be known, and their way of spending it *known,* but not interfered with, a certain sum, probably a tenth would be much more than enough, being set aside for the general purpose of the society.

I will have a decimal coinage in *absolutely pure* gold and silver, with a standard of *bread.* I do not care how small the scale on which I begin—if I only coin a thousand pounds of my own into absolutely pure decimal money, (with a lovely stamp)—of which one silver penny or ten decimes shall always command a given weight of bread fixed by a decimal standard of purity—it is enough. I know, once I begin, it will force its way.

It is curious that only today as I was finishing a piece of study of the establishment of the Kingdom of the two Sicilys I found the first step to its destruction was the issuing, by the very knight who founded it, of adulterate coin. And here, they have banknotes for twopence-halfpenny!—and charge strangers five per cent for money!

I got a letter only the day before yesterday from Chamouni—saying the people still believed a certain plot of hillside to be mine.[24] I wrote back I would take it now—at once—if they liked.

I had such a marvellous sunset the day before yesterday.

[Drawing]

—hills literally *plum* blue.—I never saw such a thing yet—And vines—and hedges by the roadside with the—things—in them all out in showers of—just tinged snow—they are paler than ours.

Ever your grateful S[t] C.

[24] He had purchased land at Chamouni, to which he was much attached all his life, in the spring of 1863.

Letter 108

Verona. 1st June
1869

My dear φίλη

It will be pretty and nice if I chance to have a letter from you to day on the first anniversary of the last happy day of my life.

I was reading a bit of my old Stones of Venice this morning —describing the approach to it. I recollect being so proud of saying that the Alps of Bassano rose over the waste grass of the lagoon, "Of the colour of dead rose-leaves."[25]

I have been writing letters to various people whom I count upon—giving directions how they are to help me with this new order of things and people. I write different things to one, and another—and I tell them to copy the letters and send their copies to you—(I mean, the girls, of course—Joan—Dora Livesey[26] & Miss Scott[27]—and an "Agatha,"[28] whom I hope much from.) Then, will you, please read these copied letters carefully, and as you see good, carry on the work among others. You will see that the Valais work is made the beginning of the other, and first direct plan for it to be associated in & with. That Valais devastation was chiefly caused by the streams coming from the central mass of the Alps—between it and the plain of Lombardy—and I resolved to set the *general* work on foot at once, in consequence of

[25] See *The Stones of Venice,* Vol. I (*Works,* IX, 406-15); note, in particular, pp. 414-15.

[26] A pupil at Winnington Hall, Cheshire, during the time Ruskin took such an interest in that school, Miss Livesey—later Mrs. Lees—was one of the young women Ruskin put into the dialogues constituting *The Ethics of the Dust* (*Works,* XVIII, 189-368).

[27] Perhaps Edith Hope Scott, later one of the original members of the St. George's Guild.

[28] Possibly a pupil at Winnington Hall.

the misery of this Italy: which these same mountains light—in vain.

There are several other curious reasons connected with the Birth place of Luini[29]—and of Titian, which, all point to this chain of mountains north of Lombardy as a kind of—Rock of Defence or *For* defence—when I get those who will work with me to feel and know one or two deep laws of work—well.

We shall want a name some day—not yet,—we must do—and be—something, before we name ourselves. But it seems to me as if "the Order of Mont Rose"—would be nice—Not far from S^{t} Bernard—and for wider good.

It's terribly tiresome that there's a stupid plebeian S^{t} George, and no proper tradition about S^{t} Georgiana. But there must be pictures of her, at Rome.

I am doing good work here—I never had more confidence in what I did being ultimately useful—and the drawings are coming pretty. But I am soon tired—and there is—Ah, such a world in ruin all round me—of dead art—and worse than dead souls.—But I am so glad to be among the old places again—I am going to Venice as soon as it is too hot here—to draw the island.

Love to φίλος. Don't let him laugh at me too much. Very little—please—though it must be dreadfully difficult not to laugh.

Ever your grateful S^{t} C

[29] Bernardino Luini (1465[?]-1540[?]) of the Lombard school of painting. Ruskin's awareness of this artist came relatively late in life, but he did much to bring him to the attention of the British public.

Letter 109

Verona. June 4th
1869

My dear φίλη,

This morning, as I was drawing, in the Piazza dei Signori, just in front of that building of which φίλος gave me the photograph, there came up the poet Longfellow and his daughter, a girl of 13 or 14, with a firm and nice fair face—and curly waves of flaxen hair over the forehead breaking over into little crests and spray in pure spirit of life—very pleasant to look upon in the midst of this pale—weary—and wicked people who fill the streets with their wretchedness.

They stood talking some little time by me, and I was vain enough to think that if the square of Verona could have been photographed then, with that exquisite building in the morning light, and Longfellow and his daughter standing talking to me at my easel—a great many people would have liked the photograph—on both sides of the Atlantic. I went to several of the places I like best with them—yesterday, and the lessons I got on the walk were several—also.

First. I found I was so very angry and hot—in my mind underneath—in perpetual Hades of indignation—where the worm dieth not & the fire—that I was not fit to talk to or be with, anybody else. They—Longfellow and his brother, and daughter, and an old friend[30] travelling with them—were very nice and interested in things. But the coldness and content that all should be—(bad or good) as it is, was like a frightful glacier gulph to me, which moved beside me, and I was always falling into it with a shiver. It was no use trying to tell them what I thought about things—I should only have seemed mad to them.

[30] Presumably Thomas Gold Appleton, who traveled with Longfellow's party in Europe in 1868-69.

Lesson the second. In these best possible examples of Americans I still felt the want of the ease—courtesy—delightfulness—of our best old English or French families—not that in Longfellow the substance of any courtesy is wanting—he is very nearly perfect—but still—that I should feel the Americanism even in these, shows the intenseness and extent of the Rude Evil of that life of Liberty.

Lesson Third.

I had ordered the carriage to meet us at such a place. The coachman and valet-de-place—instead of doing as I bid them—obsequiously haunted and spied us from street to street—giving me constant—unexpected & most troublesome runnings into the middle of horses and wheels—just when I wanted the quietest bits of my street effects. Nothing short of a fit of rabbiatura would have compelled them to do as they were bid.

Now one of the things which I want you to think of and to tell people as part of my main plan—(and a great part of it)—is the practice of an accurate and unquestioning obedience—as a most important part of Education. The great error in teaching Obedience has been the leaning on the *Submission* of it—instead of the *Accuracy* of it—as its chief virtue. It is not necessary always—or often—that it should be given in Humility. But it *is* necessary that it should be given in Perfectness.

To day—I may obey you—and tomorrow you may obey me, which of us is under the other's orders, may be a matter of chance—convenience—or momentary agreement. But whichever *is* under the other's orders must *do* them, and not think about them. Half the power of the world is lost, because people are not trained to accuracy of obedience enough to be able to act with certainty. It does not matter half so much who is captain—as that the captain—for the time—should be sure of everythings being done as he expected. And I want this to be made a daily element of discipline among children—giving first one—then another, the conduct of the play—enterprise—or study of the day; and requiring the others to give the most close—finished—absolutely unquestioning fidelity of obedience to his orders.

Of course, in other respects, the advantages to character will be great,—but the *distinctive* teaching among us will be, that one man must obey another, not that the other may crush him, but that he may *count upon* him.

I've so much to say—I must send this bit—and another tomorrow. Ever your grateful

S^{t} C.

Letter 110

Verona. 6th June [1869][31]

My dear φίλη

The much more that I had to say must yet be unsaid—for I have had many letters to write this morning. But it related chiefly to this—that while obedience must be taught chiefly for its practical use, Reverence is to be taught quite separately from it—for its beauty, and felicity. Nothing of all that I see in Italy—of real vice—of indolence—of inconsistency or absurdity—is so dark and truly hopeless as the *insolence* of the children and young men: the total absence of all human—nay of all higher animal—modesty or awe. They are as contemptible and as impudent as flies.—And I think it one of the vital points in resisting the American forms of degradation, to recover in the strictest way, all habits and ceremonies of respect—first of all, trying to find for ourselves and for those whom we teach, some persons—dead and living, whom we can think of with true reverence; and always keeping our thoughts as far as we have power—literally on "things (or people) above." But also by teaching the pleasantness of the mere temper of respect, and its dignity—and the advisability of rendering it to certain ranks and offices—irrespectively of the merits of the persons holding them; though on the other hand we must make the persons who do hold them, think it the worst of wickednesses not to deserve the respect which their order claims. And in this we have to undo the French Revolution and all the issues of it. For the Loyalty and love of Kinghood and "Noblesse" (the word in French still sounds more real than in any other tongue) which it was an insane reaction from,—was indeed a beautiful thing

[31] The commencement of this letter and the conclusion of Letter 109, linking one to the other, justify the year ascribed.

in itself:—but then—the nobles had no care to preserve it by giving it just grounds, and the arrogance of their assured divinity brought its necessary punishment.

But noblesse in a state is as truly necessary to it as fire on a househearth—It burnt up all France in its pride—and then came the steam fire engine—and though the ashes smoke a *little still*—people say triumphantly—*We never will have* any more fire! But they must rebuild their house—and light its true fire in it again. And one of the first functions of our order must be its perfect Heraldry—and recovery of every trace of the great lives of all the families of civilized races: and its consistent and ordered reverence for these—which will have advantage in many directions at once—making the study of all history more personally interesting to a great number;—making it partly necessary to all: giving motive for more than ordinary selfdenial and exertion to the members of leading families, and making reverence more easy & lovely by rendering it to the Dead in the Living.

Yesterday I was trying to draw the cornice of the tomb of Can Grande—a few leaves of it, I mean. It is formed by a series of little double leaves, bent like this [diagram]—and nodding over, as if they were a little weary, because Can Grande was dead. Well—I *could*'nt draw them a bit—and tried again and again—at last—I had actually to paint them completely, with the *dust* lying on them, before I could get their curves. And so, if Can Grande is alive—he would see an Englishman yesterday drawing the very particles of Dust upon his tomb.

This is a new chapter of my own Ethics[32] for me—is'nt it? Love to φίλος.

Ever your grateful & affectionate
S[t] C.

[32] A reference to *The Ethics of the Dust* (*Works*, XVIII, 189-368).

Letter III

Verona.
6th June [1869][33]

My dear φίλη

A word or two are still necessary to complete the sketch of what I meant in my last letter.

The two opposed parties of wrongly minded aristocrats and wrongly minded revolutionists centre all their errors, the first in thinking labour degrading,—the second in thinking reverence degrading. We have to strike at the root of both these base thoughts—and to show that idleness and insolence are degrading—labour and respect exalting.

Respect exalts in two ways—If there is any real nobleness in the person honoured, it brings it all into greater power: and if any nobleness in the person honouring, it becomes brighter in the power of laying its assertions aside for a time in the sight of man. And although the chief good of the principle of doing honour, is in the true discernment of the people who deserve it; yet the honouring of a certain number of persons indiscriminately, and because they belong to a race, has this further good in it; that it will bring out qualities in the persons so treated which we could not have known otherwise,—and make them the best they can be,—and as the pride which such respect causes in bad men, is of no harm to the state, provided its laws are firm, while whatever strength and resolution respect gives to them, can cause in good men, is all clear gain to the state, the "political economy" of honour remains unquestionable. Only it is before all things necessary to separate the ideas of Rank and of wealth.—Resolvedly *Poor* Kings and Nobles are of all the noblest—and there is no possibility of the Aristocracy now maintaining itself as a great

[33] The year is based on the close connection between this letter and Letter 110.

power to draw rents from and shoot over land. The days of *that* Aristocracy are infallibly numbered—(and the number is somewhat short, also)—there is the more need that those of our Nobles, who care either for their own order, or for its good influence over the people, should at once take stand on higher ground.

I hope to be able to work out a piece of mediaeval history here which will show very clearly by what tenure the Noblesse of any age has stood—and by what follies fallen. But I can do so little, each day, and the days are so few. Love to φίλος

Ever your grateful S^{t} C

Letter 112

Verona.
Albergo due Torri
13th June. 69.

My dear φιλη

Your letter is a great help and comfort to me especially what you say of what φιλος thinks.—But as for "longing to begin the new life"—you *have* begun it—years ago—(and I believe—without talking of it—do much more than I ever attempted)—and neither φιλος nor you can quit or change your relations with the many public and private persons who depend on you, any more than I can sell Denmark Hill and leave my mother comfortless, while I go digging—We must all quietly and patiently confirm whatever is good where we are—and act as we can in consistent directions—To know where we are going—is the chief thing—not to move fast,—and chiefly to be quite clear upon the Employment question; —that is to say we are all bound to do as much as we healthily can—towards our own support and that of others—or for their good & help—and never to waste or consume under the quite —(I use a strong word—for it is the chief deception of this time)—the diabolically false notion of "giving employment" by our waste. Mr Harris[34] is strong and clear on this,—but I do not think he is right in having no servants. The great human relation between master and servant is one of the most precious means of help and affection between persons of

[34] Thomas Lake Harris (1823-1906), already mentioned in connection with Laurence Oliphant in Letter 59, n. 48. Harris, born in England, was taken to America as a child and eventually attained a reputation for spiritualistic and other occult activities. He founded a Brotherhood of the New Life, a singular community discussed at length in *A Prophet and a Pilgrim*, by H. W. Schneider and George Lawton (New York, 1942). This is an admirably full and copiously documented study of both Harris and Oliphant. Harris wrote, alas, abundantly and among his works is *The Marriage of Heaven and Earth* (Glasgow, 1903); authorities differ as to when this work was written, although, writing in his eightieth year, Harris states that the verses comprising it were put down in 1872-73. But the sentiments expressed in this letter are so similar to those in the volume that it seems possible that the book was under consideration by Smith and Elder as early as 1869.

different ranks in character. The sheets you have sent me are full of interest. I cannot judge of the view they take of sources of strength—but we all of us see darkly and little; and the great thing is to help each other in the unquestionable things in which we can at once agree.—But you will find some still more singularly close coincidences about Inspiration—or as Mr H calls it *re*spiration (he uses too many fine words without understanding them. To "breathe" is the proper word for what he means. To "respire" is to breathe *out* again:—To inspire—or to be inspired—is the right word for receiving breath—or what else may be received from Heaven—To be sure that we use the shortest and rightest possible words is of great importance—men have been more deceived by their favourite words than even by their favourite sins.) —Well—this in passing—but for his concurrence in the main fact I am most grateful—you will find why, if you will look at the sheets I have ordered to be sent you from Smith and Elders—every kind of mischance has hindered the book—I ordered a copy to be bound in the prettiest blue for you—but it won't reach you for a month yet—so just look at these sheets, about what Mr Harris says of the sympathy of plants and animals. So strongly do I feel this, that one of the chief things that have driven me to this effort is the sense of a plague in the air of heaven—and on the beauty of the earth—caused by the wilful and defiant guilt of men,—and the strangest of all to me is that here at Verona.

I find the most marvellous *painter's* spirit in the flowers—the larkspur—bluet—blue vetch—Venus looking glass—blue salvia—comfrey—and purple thistle—all of them taking a blue or purple like that of the hills—which I never yet saw the like of—in *those* flowers—the larkspur coming up to the Gentian!

In this place, once "Verona la Degna"—and the city of all sweet love—there is now a population the most mean in insolence—and disgusting in foulness—I have ever seen in any part of the world—and I am more and more made positive about the immediate need for teaching Reverence and Purity —the latter beginning with Physical purity—especially of Streams and Earth. Read the bit about Adam of Brescia in

the Inferno XXX. 58—and what follows—and consider how subtly Dante has connected this longing for *pure streams*—and the falsification of the gold, (with the sign of the *Baptists*† on it)—and the insolence and anger of the base hearts—the only words Dante is chidden for listening to—This is the reason I am going to strike, with my own money, a thousand pounds worth of pure decimal coinage—of such gold as the old Venetian sequin—which you know I told you I had to buy in 1845 to gild my first Venetian daguerreotype with—no other gold in all Venice being pure, but *that*.[35]

—and for purification of the earth—see how the flowers teach us. Try to make gentians grow where nettles do! I had a curious lesson in my own place in this—There was a waste piece of ground—not pure—I tried to make flowers grow there—not one would—now for five years I have been getting the ground purer—and the wild flowers are coming—& moss, all over, already. Don't press any of these things on anyone—but indeed—I thought of Henry Cowper and of lady Florence!—

The only necessary thing is to be quite quite clear what is to be done—as we can, in time—and by the gentlest means.

Write here, now—Albergo due Torri.

Ever your grateful S[t] C.

†This is one of the prettiest occult teachings I know anywhere—it shows how you must watch Dante's every word.

I never thought of your knowing—how could you—my evil or good days—I only meant it would have been a pretty chance—But chance is almost always adverse to me.

All written before breakfast, and after a disappointing walk. Forgive the ill writing.

That I should be compelled—by former bad habits of haste—into the discourtesy of bad writing now—whether I will or not—is only the stronger cause to me for saying always—let us do nothing badly—at any time. Too late—for myself.

[35] The manuscript breaks off here. What follows is on a separate page. But it is apparent that, although the next paragraph commences with a small letter, it is closely related to what precedes it. For instance, quite apart from the subject of the final paragraph, the small cross (here a dagger) in the postscript following Ruskin's signature refers to the same symbol used earlier in the letter.

Letter 113

Verona 25th July
1869

My dear φιλη

I wish—instead of only caring to read me—you cared to talk to me, and sometimes wrote me a line—not to thank me—or even help me—but because you wanted to say something yourself—or tell me things that interested you—The loneliness bears very heavily on me—not so much in actual depression, as in general deadening of all sense—and reducing each day to a monotony of labour, which has much more serpent than bird in the advance of it—and progresses in degraded oscillations of less and greater failure—The result of it all is daily more melancholy. I am much more just than I used to be in my estimate of the faults even of things that best please me—and—justly judged much that is most pleasing in early work as more or less childish and narrow—though exquisitely sincere—and the religion of all nations and times seems to me every day more dreadful in its folly and iniquity. That God should make us poor creatures—is to be accepted as His will—without murmur; but I feel as if we had a right to murmur at being left, poor creatures as we are, to deceive ourselves most fatally in a hope of reaching higher—or in utter inability to discern our own imaginations from external & perpetual truth.

I have done nothing yet, to speak of—in historical work—(having given all my time to drawing) and must come abroad again, (here) early next year.—I shall be at home if all is well by the end of next month for the winter—working at history chiefly—though it is very dreadful. But perhaps one use of all that I most mourn, is to fit me to see the darks in things that *are* dark—and of which others forget the existence—in the joy of their own quiet lamp and light of their room

by its sufficient love—though all round—without—*is*—the "outer darkness," and the cold.

—Write me a word if you can, to—Milan—within a week after you receive this—if directly.

Ever your affect^e^ S^t^ C.

Letter 114

Milan 11th August
1869

My dear φιλη

I read your letter this afternoon with Monte Rosa clear against the west in front of me—and Leonardos Cena under its circular convent crown is within a few hundred yards of me —and behind me—an accursed line of vast barracks—whence came bursts and howls of brutal song—the foolishest and most horrible—(now it is so through all this free Italy—)—that ever came yet from lips of men. For it is horrible with the insolence of refusal of all that is lovely and good—(Luini & Leonardo, and Mont Rosa, all as helpless to save as they would be to true herds of fiend-driven swine),—and there is the stamp of this *in every town.*

The last time I saw Mont Rosa[36]—R was writing to *me* beseeching letters to be taken into favour again—"A trail of thorny—(too true) wild rose is not so easily untwined."! Seven years since, I am very weary with the unceasing scorn and loathing in which one must breathe all breath, here—and with the grief for destruction now going on like conflagration. But I have got some good work done—Do you recollect my first gray drawing of the tomb of Can Grande? I was up at his statue on the top of it this morning—and drew him with my arms round his horse's neck to keep myself from falling. Every buckle and boss of the armour of horse and man is as finished in sculpture as any Meissonier[37] in painting—but with the noble finish—tender and living of the 14th century—at its

[36] In the early summer of 1862 when Ruskin was briefly in Milan. It was during that year that Ruskin and Rose agreed not to see each other for three years, for in 1862 Rose was only fourteen. For a comment by Ruskin upon this separation, see *Diaries,* II, 585.

[37] Jean Louis Ernest Meissonier (1815-91), French painter noted for his microscopic painting; he excelled in miniature work in oils.

best. The face of the old† Knight is bright with the strange smile which all early, strong, nations give their heroes.

Thursday morning. I have been up the cathedral before breakfast—and Monte Rosa was cloudless—and all the Alps with it, and I am writing now for Count Borromeo[38] who is going to show me his own Luinis. The old piazza Borromeo (I crossed it this morning) is still as it used to be—the grand dark brick walls and door of inlaid marble. But this town is now given up to modernism—yet it has a look of prosperity which is better than the frantic desolation of Venice and Verona—who show they are "free" only by throwing stones at the statues of their saints—and screaming blasphemy by the tombs of their knights and kings.

You say, show us the way—we will follow. You ought not to need a guide—and I—lame and weary—and plague-spoiled —what good could come of *my* trying to lead. The way is plain—if the will is—And more than this—the way is happy —Men have missed it so often—because they have thought the way of evil alone was pleasant. They would not believe that all *Her* paths were peace—and her ways pleasantness. They would not believe His yoke was easy—and his burden light —but they would not touch *it* with one of their fingers—and more than the burdens they themselves laid on other men.

The way is plain—and full of peace—but it must be trodden, not "thought about" only.

Ever your affectionate S[t] C.

† Old—no—he died at 39, but had done much. His armour is wrought all over with—what do you think? These things [diagram]

I will write you again soon.

I cannot to day to any purpose.

[38] Count Giberto Borromeo, member of a distinguished Milanese family.

Letter 115

Denmark Hill, S. E.

4th September 1869

My dear φιλος

Yes—I knew you would!—I told φιλη you would laugh at me—ages ago. Never mind.—I'll have my dig, in spite of you —and get my roots too—and live in a cave.

I'm *not* going to be kept in England by this thing.[39] I've taken it because I believed I could on the whole teach more sound and necessary things than any one else was likely to do. But I am not going to be the Oxford drawing master. I do not say my own work is one bit higher than that would be—well done—but I am not going to make Oxford the main business of my declining life.—I shall set things—as far as, with the help of the many good men who, I know, are ready to help me there, I can put them, in right train and say as much—in the course of the year—as anybody is likely to remember,—in a quiet way. But I'll bridle [?] that Rhone, or I'll know why.[40] All the arts began in Italy with good engineering—and all the pieties begin with good washing.—And your flood of pauperism will find then, work, and land, both.—I was shocked by the Rhone and Toccia valley as I went into Italy. But the Ticino valley was worse than either. Every tributary of the Ticino comes down into it—off granite—not a drop is caught by the way—and the streams seemed one and all to have chosen in their fury to go each straight through a village. In Ginuico not one house in three was left standing.

Well, come home—as soon as you can—and laugh at everybody else—as well as poor me. They all deserve it—worse.

Ever affectly Yours,

J Ruskin

Love to φιλη

Say to her—she may write whatever she likes to write about me. I shall not mistake light in the West for light in the East—now. I know the Evening and the Morning.

---

[39] His appointment as Slade Professor at Oxford.

[40] An undertaking much in Ruskin's mind.

Letter 116

Denmark Hill, S. E.

6th Sept. 1869

My dear φιλη

I have my book, this morning, directed to me in the hand I never thought to see my name written by, more;—it is an infinite comfort to poor little Joan—and I am very thankful for it.

I suppose I am meant to keep the book†—you will find out some day & tell me.

It was very pretty of you being so frightened to write to me —but please be at rest in this thing. I shall never ask—nor —think, but don't leave me so long again without a little word of *some* kind about yourself—or anything that interests you— I mean—little daily things. And don't be always in a hurry and always over-tired—whether you write to me or not.

Ever your grateful St C.

† The comments are shrewd—curiously cheerful—But the dear little thing does'nt know what death means—and therefore—not, what pain means.

Letter 117

Denmark Hill, S. E.
1st October, 1869.

My dear φιλη

I have just come on such a lovely little French song—I must write out a verse for you—the sun is so bright on the field—(clock strikes 8). I am obliged to take all the little comforts and helps I can get out of anything now—and am always gathering some bit of wool for my "deserted bird's nest—filled with snow" where I can get it—and trying to be as conceited as I can—Now you know, I have a particular liking for pictures of S^{t} Catherine. I drew another, this year—only very slightly for I was bound to do other work—but I've two, now—and shall draw all I can. Now this song is part of the commandments of Love to a good knight in the 14th century; there is a long charge, given in song after song,—but at last comes this, which is intensely curious—in one respect—here is the mediaeval—"partant pour la Syrie"—!—a little different from the modern—(I wonder if William will say—we must go on in the same direction of improvement.—)

Apres, t'en va en Surie
Par navie
Au sepulcre ou Dieu fu miz;
Et maine devote vie
Humble et lie.
Rens lui graces et merciry
Aiures le, crains, et cheriz.
Obeiz.
Humblement merci lui prie;
S'ainsi te maintiens, beau filz,
Soies fiz
A honneur ne faudras mie.

(That's *your* bit; now comes *my* bit)

Puis soit ta voie accueillie
Sans detrie
Par les desers Arabiz
Droit ou fu ensevelie
Et servie
Des anges de Paradis
Celle a qui Dieu fu amis
Et mariz,
Katherine l'enseignie:
S'en lui est ton, cuer espris,
Et assis
A honneur ne faudras mie.

---

l'Enseignie—is old Fr. for Catherine of Mount Sinai.

Your loving S^{t} C.

Denmark Hill, S. E.
(Monday morning ½ past 7. | 4th Oct 69
Sunshine through mist—dew on grass.)

My dear φιλη

I've just found such a lovely thing for us;—Hear this little bit of beginning of another song

"Et se ton bon eur t'envoie
Et ottroie
Que tu te puisses trouver
Où fortune ceulx avoie †
A qui joie,
Veult, de vaillance, donner." &c

—Now what a lovely expression—and how exquisitely French, in the best sense—thinking of them as the Fiery nation, that —"Joie de vaillance"! and remember, their old war cry. Not the English—Mon *Droit*††—But—"Mon *Joie*;" afterwards becoming by corruption—yet a pretty corruption "Mont-Joie." Now, you know, we are to be the company of Mont Rose.—And we are to be different from other companies who have tried to do right in that we are to make everything joyful and beautiful—so that *literally* it is to be "Joie de Vaillance." Then farther—you know we are to be good Heralds. And from Dante's time—Heraldry and its Blazoning were acknowledged to be French par excellence—and "there is no question about their pre-eminence"—("professor of art at Oxford").

Now—does not it all come beautifully?—the French name of the mountain—with its pretty, bye and far away *echo* of the name of the loyalest and noblest knights of Scotland (the old French allied country)—when we English could think of nothing but fighting them—and then that we can take from it at once for motto and war cry—the title of the old French Roi

d'Armes, being exactly and in every way the precise word we want, to show what we mean—Strength—set in gladness—and then—if *you* choose to go on (—I dare not—) to "Beautiful for peace—the Joy of the whole Earth—the Mount of Judah" —you may have your way. Mine lies Dead-sea wards among those who fall in the wilderness—but I may guide a few—still —and get sight of the blue beyond Jordan—before sleeping.

—Yes—please make M^r^ Oliphant understand how *very* glad I am that he can come with you.

We had hardly any talk—Neither *can* we have—there's too much—for anything to be *said*—which is in some ways—helpful to getting things Done. But I am always quite weary & dead in the evening and cannot find my thoughts,—but I think I shall be better on Tuesday.

Ever your loving S^t^ C.

[†] from "avoyer"—like "envoyer"

[††] A base cry—in its assertion of personal claim.

Denmark Hill, S. E.
5th Oct. [1869][41] (Bright morning again—after fog—and such wonderful cobwebs everywhere—all dew—and wholly innocent & useless—as regards flycatching.)

My dear φιλη,

I've found out another thing that I like—ever so much. That the old French—not royal—but universal knightly motto—is "Dieu et Droit"—not *Mon* Droit. The mon puts it all wrong for ever,—whereas the personal claim to the Joy is right & pure. I forgot to say that the mon, for m*a*, joie comes from a straight-down tradition of the latin me*um* gaudium. The gaudium becomes first goie—then joie—and the meum first mon, and then slides away into Mont,—by a curious parallel and equally pretty corruption—(*multi*plicare becomes Monteplier, and is used for an increase by Ascent—You do not Multiply love—but Monteplie it, in old French.)—Now—it just struck me—as I was looking at the song again this morning that the Scottish King-at-arms—and Troubadour, "Davie Lindsay"—was, "Sir David Lindsay of *the Mount*."—I have not looked yet for the origin of the title—but if it *is* a mere chance that he should have been "Lindsay of the mount" as distinguished from the other Lindsays, still—what an exquisite little bye-way help it is that the Scottish minstrel-herald should have had this title.

—To day—by chance—not, I hope—mischance—it happens that my dear old Oxford private tutor—afterwards censor of Christchurch—now Rector of East Hampstead—(on the moors of Ascot—), a farming—squire loving—conservative—thor-

[41] Neither this letter nor the two following are fully dated, but their connection with one another and with Letters 117 and 118 plainly indicate they belong to the year ascribed.

oughly sensible—except for a little (rosy!) edge of Ritualism on the softest leaves of his mind, clergyman of the old school —having always leave to come here whenever he likes, has chosen to come yesterday—and stays until dessert—to-day—leaving about seven oclock—I warn you—that you may not think I asked any one to meet you—and that you may not be checked in anything that might otherwise have been talked about—even at dinner—by Osborne Gordon's seemingly light or somewhat careless manner—which is indeed the veil that this kind of Englishman always manages to throw over what is best in him—complicated in Gordon with a curious sort of cheerful despair about old Toryism, which he intensely worships in the spirit of it—without seeing his way to do it in the letter—(or motto) also, as we do—because his farmer's "commonsense" trips him up always, the moment he feels himself becoming romantic.

Love to William.

Ever your loving S[t] C.

Letter 120

Denmark Hill, S. E.
6th October. [1869]

7. just striking.
Sun lovely through mist
Study looking nice because φιλησς & φιλη have been in it.

My dear φιλη

It was very nice for me last night: but I remain under a fixed impression that you are getting to be just as bad as William and that, between the two of you—I shall never be able to say a word.

I have just looked at the use of "lie" in the song I sent you. The last line in each verse is, "you shall, in nothing—not in the least—fail of, or want for, honour."

The meaning of lie is "freely or brightly glad" from the latin lactus; distilled, as it were—with another latin word—lautus,—"splendid and finished in delivery"—the old French knight's dialect distils all this into one little sweet—essential—violet-scented syllable, "lie;" you will see how principal it is in the idea of character by this general change of Love's to the young knight—that he is to be

Lie, gent, joieux—doulx—et plaisant,
Prisant les faiz de bonne gent.

Prisant. Prizing—honouring, the deeds.

(Love is very earnest about this—presently afterwards he sings again,)

"Les faits d'autrui a mal ne glose;
Pense en t'amour, qui est la rose
De bien, d'onneur, de courtoisie.
La plus belle, la plus jolie
Qui soit; et la pensée tele
Sera a ton cuer joie assouvie,
Tant lui sera plaisant et belle."

Ever your loving St C.

Denmark Hill, S. E.
7th October [1869]

(*Such* a bright morning —as if every dewdrop were a little sun in itself, and every daisy a Solar system)

My dear φιλη

—And—here's a description—of a little Fourteenth century sun of "Rosée."

"Son joyeux regart, plain d'umblesse†
Son plaisant maintieng seigneury,(!!!)
Son doulx parler—qui en tristesse
Ne me laissast jour—ne demy

(Alas—the change from 14th to 19th century! Ask William if this also is an improvement.)

Son beau corps gent, joliz, et droit,
La fresche couleur que portoit
Sa douce acountance amoureuse
Sa loiauté—que tant valoit,††
Sa belle beauté gracieuse,—
Celle fu m'amour."

††"Which was so strong;"
not "which was so precious" only

Now—I won't write any more little letters like this—but will put down little bits of things that I like—day by day and so make a long one.

Then—its sure to be lost—in crossing the river—and so you won't be wearied.

Mr. Oliphant told me wonderful things. Please—cancel all I said about Mr. Harris's imperfect writing.[42] I understand it now.

Ever your loving S[t] C.

† Not *"humbleness"*—by any means!! but Latin "amoenitas" —gentleness—or perhaps, more, "attractiveness"—*"ameuer."*

[42] In Letter 112.

Letter 122

Denmark Hill, s.e.

8th October 1869

My dear φιλη

It was very sweet of you to write to me today.[43] I have the little view of Rome beside me, and have been thinking thirty years away.—And I am glad to have the day for my own little calendar, of festas and days of memory, that no one else knows.

You need not fear hurting me—but you cannot comfort or help me—by anything you can now send. Words—and omens—and promises—and prayers—have failed me too often —to leave me any care now for any of them—were it otherwise—all is now too late. I can never be to her—what I was to her once—Nor she what she was to me. That I can play, in the words of my morning letters—means—in the depth of it—a greater sadness than if I did not—It means that I speak as another person would—feeling what I once felt. But nothing she could now do—or give—could efface the pain she has given,—or restore to either of us—what we have lost.

Yet do not be unhappy about me—In many ways—this pain has fitted me for my work—and in the work itself, if I am spared to do any part of it—I shall have a true and increasing happiness, of a certain hard kind,—you say you will love me more—I don't think you will—for I shall be more and more separate from you in the material and mechanical thoughts which are all that I have to depend upon in my work, but I am not afraid of your leaving me—now—helpless—as R did, and this is a great good to me.

You made Joan and Connie so happy this afternoon—the birthday has been bright to *them*, at any rate.

---

[43] Mrs. Cowper's birthday.

Connie wants sadly to have a photograph of William too—may she have one? I said I would ask for her.

I will try—as far as is in me—to make your next birthday still happier.

Ever your loving S^{t} C.

(Turn the leaf)

Here is a little song—out of Chaucer's honied lips, for the eighth of October.

Within an isle methought I was,
Where wall and gate was all of glass.
And so was closed round about
That, leveless, none came in, nor out.
And of a suit were all the towers,
Subtilly carven after flowers.
But man, or live, I could not see.
Nor creature—save ladies play,
Which were such, of their array
That, as me thought, of goodlihead
They passed all, and, womanhead.
For to behold them dance and sing
It seemed like none earthely thing.
And of one age every one
They seemed all,—save only one,
That had of yeeres suffisance
For she might neither sing, nor dance,
But yet her countenance was so glad
As she no fewe yeeres had,
As any lady that was there.
Fairie had she been—in her daies,
And maistresse seemed well to be
Of all that happy company
And so she might, I you ensure,
For one the conningest creature
She was, and so said every one—
That ever her knew—there failed none
For she was sober and well avised,
And from every fault disguised,
And nothing used but faith and truth,
—That she n'as young it was great ruth,
For everywhere—and in each place

She governed her, that in grace
She stood always with poor and riche
That—at a word—was none her like,
Ne half so able maistresses to be
To such a happy Company.[44]

[44] Cf. "Chaucer's Dream" (ll. 71 ff.) in Thomas Tyrwhitt's edition of *The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (London, 1843), pp. 389-90.

Letter 123

Denmark Hill, S. E.
10th October. 1869.
Misty morning, a little dim

My dear φιλη

I mistranslated "umblesse" in the song of "celle fut m'amour" —it comes not from attractive, but from "humane" in Latin. I can't yet find its right relations to humilitas and humilis, but it comes itself from humanitas—and humanus,—and here is a marvellous line I came on, this morning, which has everything in it "Courtois serez d'umble courage."

Courtois is a very curious word. Its *own* cour—comes from the cour meaning court—Italian Corte—the *Enclosed* place,—where the King is throned. But the "cour" in courage is from Cor, the heart, and "Courtois" *reads* its own cour *into* that when it becomes "courteous" in the deep sense of it in this line.

"Thou shalt be courteous with humane fulness of heart," that is the literal translation of "courage." Heart-fulness—as cheer-fulness—&c. Of course you know most of this as well as I—and some of it better—but it happens that what little I knew—and what little more I can learn—seems just now to come prettily together and to be worth telling you—in this matter.

I must post this fragment of a letter for poor Joanna has been called to Scotland to nurse a sister who is seriously ill: and the last thing last night, before leaving, asked me to tell you—for she could not—how very, very happy she had been in seeing you on Friday. Which indeed she was, and is happier now in any sorrow she has to bear—or anxiety—in thinking of the regard which William & you have given to her.

Ever your loving St C.

Letter 124

21st Oct. [1869][45]
Turn the leaf

My dear φιλη

I was very—and more than very—grateful for your letter—though promises, for heavenly times to come—are vain to *me*. I shall never claim them—but thanks for them no less.

I should have written before—but had nothing but pain to tell you about poor Joanna's sister—and poor Joanna herself.—The illness protracts itself. As soon as I have intelligence—dark—or hopeful I will write.

Ever your loving S[t] C.

My own work goes on—I think the name of my flower book[46] is fixed, now—Cora Nivalis (or perhaps Cora Nivium) (Proserpine of the Snows). An introduction to the study of Alpine and Arctic Wildflowers. I think I have all my chief orders of plants fixed. There are to be seven orders of the *Dark* Cora

1. Draconids.

2. Anemone
3. Nightshade.
4. Ivy
5. Hemlock
6. Poppy
7. (Deadliest) Forgetmenot.

I'll tell you the Bright orders—Well—I may as well now—for all chance of brightness is alike at all times—for me—There are the bright ones.—Turn leaf again.

[45] The year is based on Ruskin's reference in Letter 123 and in this letter to the illness of Joan's sister.

[46] Ruskin is referring to his botanical book, *Proserpina*, which was issued in parts from 1875 until 1886. This letter's early study for it is noteworthy. The background of this publication is given in *Works*, XXV, xxxii ff.

The 12 noble cinqfoil orders.

Stonecrop	Gentian	Pea	Pink
Saxifrage	Bluebell	Pansy	Peach
Primrose	Bindweed	Daisy	Rose.

The Two Quatrefoil orders. Of the Mountains. Heath. Of the lakes. *Lotus*†.

(†I alter the present name to this) for water lilies.

The Four Domestic Orders.

Thyme. Wallflower. Mallow. Geranium.

And then, the orders of Cora.
Don't show my classifications to any one—it's only for you & William.

Do you see what Proserpine spells—if you take P (for pet)—and R—(next the Rose)—away from it? Ros–Epine.

Letter 125

Denmark Hill, S. E.
24th October [1869][47]

My dear φιλη

Indeed, I fear that poor little Joan is still foolish enough to be troubled by that piece of news;[48]—though—when I think how I should feel—if I heard that some one else was going to be married—I don't wonder.—But I must know the circumstances—as far as one of the public may know them—before I write to Joan about it.

Poor little Proserpine never understands other people's pain—and as long as she thinks she pleases her own chief Friend—and supposes He is taking care of *her* in a special manner—she can't have very acute pain of her own.

Remember—I ask nothing—only—if—irrespective of any communication with her—you could form any guess what she meant by sending me that book—(there was a bit of my own weed—and a single rose-leaf (*green* leaf only) laid together into the page about the Dioscoridae)[49]—and as far as I can make it out—she seems to think that since I can't be anything else to her—I may be a correction of the press. Which is not a very nice notion for an inspired young person, like her.

Thank you for all you say—about Broadlands—and William for his little signature.

---

[47] That the year ascribed is likely may be deduced from *Diaries,* II, 685, where, in an entry of October 31, 1869, Ruskin writes of his Chaucerian studies, as he does in this letter. Also, his plan to edit great literary works, among them Chaucer's, for young people, is noted in a letter of November 17, 1869, to Charles Eliot Norton. See Norton, II, 254.

[48] Most probably a reference to the engagement of Percy La Touche to Lady Annette Scott, daughter of the Third Earl of Clonmell. The couple married on February 9, 1870.

[49] A heart-shaped plant deriving its name from the Greek naturalist and physician Dioscorides.

Next year I might be able to come—and not be troublesome to you, but I am still restless under the pain† and am better at home, or alone.

Also—I have much on hand—In order to set as well on foot as may be the beginnings of effort towards recovery of the love of fair and quiet things. I am going to do as I have long intended—edit a few books for young people—with such notes as may make them—I hope—more easily—yet more attentively read.

—The first of these is to be Chaucer's "the Flower and the Leafe"—as beautifully printed and bound and interpreted—as I can contrive.—Besides I have to prepare myself in thought —very quietly—for Oxford work[50]—and to choose some definite series of studies for the Schools.—And the days glide by with dark speed.

Ever your loving S^{t} C.

†It will soothe me a little—next year—if I have been able to do some of the things I want to do—so that people may hear of me a little.

[50]As Slade Professor of Fine Art.

Letter 126

Denmark Hill, S. E.
Monday [October 27, 1869][51]

My dear φιλη

Here is Joan's sad little letter of this morning for you (perhaps she has written to you herself—but I send it) I am obliged to go on with my work absolutely refusing to allow my mind to stay on anything that pains it. The moment I can work no longer, I try to sleep, or to get into some vegetative state—in which—while I am conscious of a darkness about me on all sides, I can yet avoid looking at it so as to trace its evil spectres—but of the work, and the various gratifications either of curiosity—or self-love which it more or less involves, I get enough light even for cheerfulness—on the condition of being daily harder and more withdrawn from other people—either in their happiness or sorrow—if great. I sympathize tenderly with Joan when she tears her dress—or breaks her plate. To day, I am not thinking of her. I enjoy exceedingly, bringing her home a new necklace; but if she ever is greatly happy again, I shall tell her—to keep out of my way.

Now, if I can do this, and on the whole keep on at decisive and useful work, while I have no hopes nor help of any kind, —except those of the desire of being useful, and the desire of worldly praise—and the interest of the work itself—(while also, I have to fight with a form of sorrow which I think you must allow in its subtlety—*humiliation,* and complex mystery of loneliness and horror, to be one of the most curiously frightful you ever knew or read of in invented story)—it puzzles me singularly to understand why *you* should want support—or

[51] The date is based on the reference in the first sentence to "Joan's sad little letter." In *Diaries,* II, 684, in the entry under this same date, Ruskin writes of a "Sad letter from poor Joanna." Further references in the text to Joan's sadness and to his own Chaucerian studies suggest strongly the date editorially ascribed.

even think it necessary for others—in any practical action you think right. You have hope that I have not—companionship that I have not—above all—purity of thought and memory and nature that I have not—and yet you hesitate about definite action because you have not directly supernatural aid. If what you believe is true—that aid would come as soon as you entirely gave yourself to declared and uncompromising exertion. If untrue—well—I will write no more today—What *is* the matter with my paper—it's all over coal dust on one side—blots on the other—like my mind & fate.

But it carries its message—still—in its poor rude way. I'm working hard at my Chaucer.[52] I'm pretty sure now of being able to edit a piece this year, which will throw great & tender light on English character in the 14th century—above all on Chaucer's own personal Love.

I wonder what somebody will say when she reads his description of his lady

> "Well—All is well—now shall ye see, she[53] said
> The fairest lady under sunne that is
> Come on with me—demean you like a maid,
> With shamefaced dread—for you shall speak, ywis
> With her that is the mirror of joy & bliss
> But somewhat strange, and sad of her demean,
> She is:—beware your countenance be seen
>
> Or over light—or reckless—or too bold,
> Nor malapert—nor ruining with your tongue
> For she will you obeisen and behold
> And ask of you why you were hence so long
> Out of Love's court—without resort among
> And Rosiall her name is called aright
> Whose heart as yet is given to no wight."[54]

---

[52] Ruskin had a great interest in Chaucer, as a glance at *Works*, XXXIX, 111, will show. A good summary of his Chaucerian concerns may be found in Caroline F. E. Spurgeon's *Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion* (3 vols.; Cambridge, 1925), I, lxiv-lxv.

[53] Ruskin here inserts a cross to indicate that he intends to footnote his text. Since the letter terminates abruptly, however, the conclusion is presumably lost.

[54] Cf. "The Court of Love," lines 729-42 in *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. W. W. Skeat (7 vols.; Oxford, 1894-97), VII, 428-29.

Letter 127

Denmark Hill, S. E.

6th Nov. [1869][55]

My dear φιλη

I am at a pause because I don't know how far I wrote out the plans of our society.—I wish Florence would be gracious enough, if she's with you still, to write out of your letters from your dictation—what I can use publicly—& send it me—and ask me—both, please—what more I ought to make clear—I'm in great haste today but have put off from day to day saying this—& here's Saturday.

Ever your loving St C.

No model of courtesy—*this*—But it is because I am clumsy & rude—that I know the need so well.

[55] The date ascribed is based upon other letters of this year dealing with ideas for a Utopian society (e.g., Letter 107); also, the reference to "courtesy" connects with Ruskin's concerns of this period (see, e.g., Letter 123).

Letter 128

Denmark Hill, S. E.
19th November. [1869-71][56]

My dear φιλη

So many thanks for the little sermon. But it is impossible for me ever to be as I was in the day of my youth again,—and, believe me, I am better—as I am, for all *I* have to do, *now*. Nor for the things I might have done—and never can—now. But that is so with many men's lives. They lose the best that was in them, but another good of an opposite kind—equally theirs, takes its place, or may take it if they do their best. Meantime—be as religious as you please—but do not let yourself be lulled into trust in the great heresy of this age—that God will put great things right—though He lets little things go wrong—if only we trust in Him. The great things—like the little—will turn out finally ill—or well according to our own human care—and are properly to be called "ill" or "well" according to human perceptions. If the Cook makes the Pudding heavy—through her trust in Providence—she is even a more capable Cook than if she had done her poor impious best—and failed. And a Heavy Pudding is a Bad and not a Good Pudding, and there an end—and that's what *I've* got to preach —*now*.

Ever your—(within comfortable and undisturbing limits—) loving,

St C.

---

[56] The salutation suggests that the letter was written no earlier than 1868. Since Letter 91, dated November 30, 1868, seems, from internal evidence, to be the first letter that Ruskin wrote Mrs. Cowper (who became Mrs. Cowper-Temple on November 17, 1869) upon his return from France, then Letter 128 was probably written on November 19 of one of the three remaining years that Ruskin's residence was Denmark Hill.

Letter 129

Denmark Hill.
S. E.
[December 8-13, 1869][57]

My dear φιλη

Yes—it's all very fine—you will Joan to be loving to me because "I want it"—and then you go and leave me in the fog here without a word of comfort for a month—and then you say I'm fading away. I really was beginning to think R had made you give me up—I'm always afraid of that. I said I was'nt;—but that was'nt true—I always am—when you're more than a week or so without writing.

Don't send any thorns to Scotland—nor here. Joan and I have both enough just now. I shall be scolded by Joan afterwards; but I'm sure you had better not. I am getting her gradually into heart again—partly by being intensely provoking—and writing her word every day of something I've turned upside down in the house—till she's in a perfect panic about the china and glass and things—Then I send word that nothing's broken—and she's quite restored to peace of mind. It's the most successful homoeopathy!—But no thorns—thank you. They get in, and fester.

Look here—I really want that letter about obedience.[58] I've got to give a lecture on Tuesday next—to the Woolwich officers—it's to be on the Future of England—and I really can't be at the trouble of writing all that out of my head again. —Please send me the letter, or the two letters, and I'll take care of them—as Joan says you care for them—like a kind little flattering φιλη.

---

[57] The textual reference to the lecture on "Tuesday next" helps to date this letter with reasonable accuracy. On Tuesday, December 14, 1869, Ruskin lectured on "The Future of England" at Woolwich, and he is apparently writing this letter within six days of that time. For the lecture, see *Works*, XVIII, 494 ff.

[58] Most likely a reference to Letter 109.

Do you know one of the things in a small way—that I'm sorry about the loss of in myself—and for others—is the loss of the love letters I—should have written.

There would have been some generally not-readable bits in them now and then—which would have been nice—You know —I never wrote her *one* real one. They were always restrained —broken—either on parole—or in doubt and fear. They would have been nice.

Joan is pretty well, now,—seriously—in spite of news—she is very strong in her sense of right, now, and always does it, I think, and is useful to everybody.—But I don't know when she is coming home.

Love to φιλος.

Ever your grateful
St C.

Letter 130

Denmark Hill.
S. E.

[Mid-December, 1869][59]

Dear φιλη

Thanks. The lecture went off well—much the better for a bit I could read out of one of those letters. But I must write you some more.

φιλος has been making a lovely speech about drawing, I hear. He had much better leave political economy to *me*—and take the Mastership of Gardening and Art Work—together. Not Market Gardening of course. I'll undertake for the cabbages if He & you will, for the things I don't like. Ever your

S^t^ C.

[59] The date is derived from the textual reference to the lecture mentioned in Letter 129 and given, as noted, on December 14, 1869.

Letter 131

Denmark Hill. S.

[1869][60]

Yes. φιλη always.

And I am *not* unjust to her.

I have but one word of eternal blessing for her—one thought of eternal love—though she slay me.

But the purpose of God is that angels should love as angels, and children as children. But maidens, as neither of these. And it is because she loves only as these—that now *she* cannot help me—though angels—& children—may. And that she does love only as these—you yourself have been most earnest that I should know.—I know it too well.

Can you come out here some day? I could show you a sketch of her which I kept for myself—You would like it better, a little than the one at Harristown—but all are vain.

You do not quite know the depth of this thing. You do not know what the Mother seemed once to me—nor what acuteness of mockery there was in her [*illegible*]. And R. *could* not have gone but that she is yet a child. For it was there—on the same day last year—that I had the only hour of perfect peace in love that life has ever given me. She gave herself to me for the time—without shadow—even caressed my arm a little as we walked.

Yet do not you be unjust—nor think me unthankful—for what I have but I have served my seven years—and I am old—and weary.

[60] The conjectural date of this fragment will doubtless be as unsatisfactory to the reader as it is to the editor. It is derived from Ruskin's reference to his weariness after seven years of "serving" Rose, a theme that appears in other correspondence of 1869 (see, e.g. Letter 114).

Letter 132

Denmark Hill.
S. E.

4th January, 1870

Dear φιλη

Thank you for wanting a line—but there's no good in me, neither—just now. Joan has come back[61] & will help me,—and you will have some pleasure in what I am doing, if I can get it done,—but—that Rose has been driving me quite mad again. I think it is so horrible of her while she leaves me to die or live as I can, (deservedly or not—if deservedly all the more cruelly)—while she amuses herself with pretty dialogues with the Angels on the noble and all engrossing subject of herself.

I am seriously beginning to wonder whether she's a demon made of red earth, sent to take all my strength and good out of me that's left for any use.

Joan *is* a real angel;—she keeps as cheerful and sweet as ever while I am by, to keep from hurting me—then I see the poor face get sad in a minute or two—when it's by itself.[62]

But she is looking better than I hoped.

Will you be in town near end of month. No—I mean the beginning of next. I'm going to give a lecture on Verona on 4th February at the Royal Institution.[63] If only that pink thing could hear it—I've something to say about the wife of Theodoric[64]—which would vex her—I fancy.

Love to William. Write quickly and tell me your cold is better.

Ever *your* loving St C.

---

[61] From Scotland.

[62] Joan had much to sadden her at this time. The sister she had gone to Scotland to nurse (see Letter 123), a Mrs. Simson, was very ill indeed; also, the memory of Percy La Touche's conduct was strong upon her, and Ruskin's relations with Rose were moving toward another crisis.

[63] "A Talk respecting Verona and its Rivers" (*Works*, XIX, 425-48).

[64] Who is not, actually, mentioned in the lecture.

Letter 133

Denmark Hill.
S. E.

8th January, 1870

My dear φιλη

I went into the rooms of the Royal Academy yesterday at about noon: and the first person I saw was R.[65]

She tried to go away as soon as she saw me, so that I had no time to think—I caught her,—but she broke away so that I could not say more than ten words—uselessly.

She then changed her mind about going, and remained in the rooms apparently quite cheerful and undisturbed. Having looked at her well, I went up to her side again, and said "I think you have dropped your pocketbook," offering her her letter of engagement between the golden plates.[66] She said "No." I said again—No? enquiringly. She repeated the word. I put the letter back into my breast and left the rooms.

She is usually as quick as lightning but I am not sure that she saw clearly what it was I offered her. She might have thought it was only an endeavour to give her a letter. I am so brisé that I can hardly move or think, to day.

What shall I do? It is so very dreadful its coming just when I wanted my mind to be clear & strong.

I can deal with it all as pure devilry—and put it wholly away if I choose—and remember her only as my curse—but then—I cannot any more do the half of what I meant.

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[65] The meeting recorded in this letter explodes a popular fallacy about Rose and Ruskin, a fallacy perpetuated by scholars and originating with E. T. Cook. In *The Life of John Ruskin* (2 vols.; London, 1911), II, 168, Cook notes—while examining Ruskin's diaries—he found the following entry: "Last Friday about 12 o'clock noon my mistress passed me and would not speak." By a queer series of scholarly transformations, the words "in the street" have been affixed to this statement, as in *Diaries*, II, 692-93. Similarly, Joan Evans in *John Ruskin* (London, 1954), pp. 311-12, speaks of Rose and Ruskin passing in the street. And Derrick Leon, p. 478, mentions the same incident occurring under the same conditions. What actually happened on January 7, 1870, is apparent from Letter 133.

[66] Between which it was Ruskin's habit to carry certain of Rose's letters.

Even as it is, however, the Chaucer and French are stopped —my lectures now giving me much trouble—and those books coming set me all wrong at the beginning of the year.

I was talking with Helps[67] last night about the way both he and I who were both trying to do good have had our best strength crushed. He answered, "Indeed—there is but one answer. There *is* a Devil." Don't say a word to Joan about this.

Ever your loving S[t] C.

[67] Arthur Helps (1813-75), novelist, historian, essayist, and civil servant, whose "beautiful quiet English" Ruskin recognizes in *Modern Painters*, Vol. III. In 1860 Palmerston offered Helps the position of Clerk of the Privy Council, which he accepted. This office brought Helps a close, harmonious friendship with Queen Victoria, extracts from whose journals he edited. But Helps's literary efforts earned him only the most frugal recognition by posterity. However one critic, H. Preston-Thomas, paid him tribute in *Blackwood's Magazine*, CXLVIII (July, 1890), 44-53. Helps, who was knighted in 1872, suffered disastrous financial reverses in the sixties when he tried to establish a pottery business in Hampshire; this may be what is referred to in the rest of the sentence above as crushing his "best strength." This unhappy business venture, designed partly to establish Helps's notions of correct relations between labor and capital, is discussed in the *Correspondence of Sir Arthur Helps*, edited by his son, E. A. Helps (London, 1917), pp. 10-11.

I did not send this, for fear you were ill. Read the last page first. Tell me how you are yourself.

Denmark Hill,
S.E.
Sunday, 9th Jany. [1870][68]

My dear φιλη

I wonder how you are. I have been little helpful to you—with my last two letters I know. This is only to say that I am a little better today and not going to be beaten, for the moment, though I will not keep up this struggle for long, for I find it is telling upon me more than I knew.—If she really does not care for me any more at all—I cannot go on—the whole thing will have been so horrible that every word I tried to say about God or right would choke me. Do you know that feeling of breathlessness? I don't think it is brought on by any degree of common, right, human grief,—however deep. I think it comes only with—what you do not know—the sense of frightfulness & bitterness in the manner of it—and the having *no* comfort. However—I will still keep the 2nd February for the first lecture[69] as I meant, and I shall use the collect[70] for the day in beginning:—only omitting the words "only begotten."

[68] The year ascribed is based on several facts. First, January 9 fell, in 1870, on a Sunday. Second, toward the conclusion of this letter which, it will be noted, seems like one complete letter followed by another without a heading, Ruskin remarks upon his mental state eighteen months previously; he is thinking of an especially grievous stage of his blighted relations with Rose, as Letter 85 (June 2, 1868) indicates; see also *Diaries*, II, 649, for his unhappy entry on the same date. Finally, the reference to the devil in the second part of this letter comes hard upon a similar reference in Letter 133.

[69] Possibly a reference—erroneous in date, however—to the *Lectures on Art* Ruskin gave at Oxford in Hilary Term, 1870. They were delivered on February 8, 16, 23, and March 3, 9, 16, 23 respectively. They are to be found complete with bibliographical information in *Works*, XX, 1 ff. These lectures are frequently mentioned in his letters at this time. February 2, 1866, was the date Ruskin proposed to Rose.

[70] For the Purification of Saint Mary the Virgin, which falls on February 2.

In that letter you never got—from Como—I had told you of a lovely evening on which I went from Milan to Como. The sun set cloudlessly—behind—(with *precision*)—behind Monte Rosa, drowning the whole mountain in light—it could be dimly seen, through one's hand in the middle of the flame. As the sun touched the edge of the crags—we stopped at a station, "Stazione di *Desio*"[71]—I notice so many of these quite futile—helpless—*merely* strange chances and omens—like the flowers at the lecture.[72] When we went on again the sun was gone.

Do you know—I think, almost, it would help me just a little if you would not write to her any more—I am so jealous of you—it takes away your own power of being kind to me. If I were to send you these books she sent me—could you send them back to her—and the prayerbook?

Mind you tell me at once what you can or cannot do—without being afraid of hurting me. I can get them sent back to her otherwise—only I would rather you did it.

Ever your affectionate S[t] C.

I have your lovely little note. It is very helpful. But—do you know I am not quite sure that the devil *is* beaten, by beating. I am rather fancying that sometimes he is to be beaten by yielding. What is to say, suppose I were able to bring what you would call good and victory out of this. Then you would all say that it was all right. And saintly pink personages would just do the same to other people—Whereas—supposing I were beaten—and—suppose—after giving some few opening words at Oxford to show what I had meant and hoped to do—I confessed that it had become impossible for me now,—and did what I would fain do—get away somewhere out of it all—and ceased troubling. Then people would understand at once that wrong *was* wrong. Which is the sum of all I have got to say with all my labour—And my mind is getting so mixed up now of desire for revenge—and a kind of hatred which the love is changing into that my whole existence is becoming distorted—and I don't well understand anything—besides a shame and anger at myself—increasing day by day,

[71] "Station of Desire."

[72] See Letter 80.

—which checks me and lowers—too fatally. But don't be afraid for me for the moment. I know I am very wrong in being so wretched—for—on the 2nd of June[73]—a year and a half ago —I had not even the hope of being useful any more to any one—and should have thought the day had come back in brightness if I had had certainty of but half the power for good that I have now.

But the truth is—when she sent me my book all marked over with her writing,—I am afraid—I got into a state of deadly hope again, though I thought I did'nt.

—It is more than not knowing what to do—that makes me so tremulous now.

Ever your loving St C.

[73] Cf. Letter 85.

Letter 135

Denmark Hill.
S. E.

[Mid-January, 1870][74]

Dear Isola

I'm going to call you *that* now,—(bella understood, of course—and the Iago—che si fa sempre maggiore). I won't any more call you what any one else does.

Please send me a little line, about Something. I don't care what. And say that you like writing to me—if you do. Its so very nice & pretty of you to ask M^r^ Macdonald. It will be such a joy to him, and you and he will be so happy talking—nonsense, together—I would'nt mind any wager that you did'nt either of you say a word that anybody could understand—or that everybody did'nt want to—from the time he comes till he sorrowfully departs.

What do you think is to be the gist of my second lecture at Oxford—on the relation of Art to Religion? That—on the whole—Art has always suffered for helping Religion—and Religion for being helped by art!

(Poor little Pussie is busy "illuminating" beside me—and making letters that nobody can read.—Now if only she could do all your & M^r^ Macdonalds talk—that way—how lovely it would be!)

But won't the high church people be nicely taken in? I won't let the low-church people have any the better of them however—you may be sure of that! We know something of that side of the question—don't we—and the good that comes of—&c—&c.—&c?

Don't you think—Isola—you had better let me go away somewhere—after all—and not say such horrid things? If you don't write to me directly—I'm capable of anything.

Ever your loving S^t^ *M.*

[74] As Letter 137 indicates, Ruskin was calling Mrs. Cowper-Temple "Isola" by January 19. This letter was most probably written, then, shortly before that time.

Letter 136

Denmark Hill.
S. E.

[1870 or later][75]

My dearest Isola—

I should like her quite well enough to make me much more comfortable than I am: but whether she would like *me* well enough to make *her* comfortable at all—on those terms, is another question. Not that it is at all necessary that a man should love a woman, to be loved by her,—quite the contrary, as far as I know; at this instant, there is quite a precious girl—(not Flo, though she's precious too)—whom I am quite sure I could get—if I asked her,—and, though Flo's very proud, (so's the other for that matter—as a girl ought to be)—I think if I were to try very hard perhaps I could get Flo, and either of them would be quite happy, if they did take me, at least I think so,—in the real tenderness & care I should give them. But they would not make me happy—these—the first, because she is'nt what I want to look at, and the second because she's in weak health—and besides she's too clever. I want nothing in a girl but bright health—delicate features—and contentment,—the power of taking pleasure in little things. Joanna was exactly right for me—in that matter†—Flo tries me after my work, by being too clever, and fanciful. Twenty years ago, she would have been the very creature for me—but now, I only want a sort of fawn, or bird.

I do want that. Very seriously if I wer'nt a professor and lecturer on morals, I should go away to some far *[illegible]* French town and get a French girl out of a convent—or a cottage—it would not much matter which, and stay with her in her own country and be heard of no more,—only I've such a horrible set of "duties" to do, and every day I feel partly as if the devil found them for me, partly as if he hindered me

[75] Letter 135 indicates that Ruskin intends to call Mrs. Cowper-Temple "Isola" from this time forward—hence the conjectural date.

in them, never as if any help or good was coming to me—always as if what good I have was sure to leave me.—Still, I am really beginning to have a little faith in your staying, and liking to have me for

Your loving S[t] C.

except that I'm much worse, really, than I used to be. It is'nt merely a fawn or bird that I want—but a soft thing for a pillow, mainly—which is horrid of me.

[†] So is Flo, only she would want me to play at the little things with her—and there's no play left in me.

Letter 137

Denmark Hill.
S. E.

19th January. 1870

My dear kind Isola

I am very thankful, and will begin to shape little fancies and idols for myself out of coral. But I could not come—neither last night, nor to day,—the drawings are being framed and catalogued for Royal Institution and I cannot leave my work. Nor can I well do anything else but work. I cannot speak—except what you would call the saddest form of nonsense. I *am* so sad. Joan insisted that it was—behaved like a "fiend," instead of "flint." It *ought* to have been—but she thinks herself much too far from that for the idea to have entered the little golden head—and also—you don't always cross your ts,—(no more do I.) So I showed poor Joanna that it was a terminal, t. Alas, if only she *did* behave like a flint! My flints *comfort* me. When I've said all that's in my mind against religion generally, I shall settle myself quietly to write the "history of flint"—long intended,—headed by the species, "Achates Rosacea"—I gave her such a pretty piece of rose-quartz ages ago—little thinking—when I told her laughing—it was a type of her (which made her very angry, *then*) that she would ever say so with her own lips.

Look here—Joan wants so much to see you—and has had such heavy times lately,[76] that I'm made uncomfortable by feeling that I keep her here; and I'm going to send her down by the one o'clock train to morrow—Please cosset her up a little for me—as you only can. I'm so sorry for her, that it makes me better able to spare her than to take her help, though that is much.

[76] Joan had recently heard that her sister, mentioned in Letter 123, had died. See, also, Letter 132, n. 62, and *Diaries*, II, 693, entry of January 16, 1870.

It was much better to write to me than to go to prayers. And a real long sweet letter!: I've never had so nice a one yet, quite. If M^r^ Macdonald is with you, give him my love.—I do love him, he has been very true to me. I am so—happy—Yes—even that—in thinking of your being kind to him and how he deserves it, and how he will sun himself in it.

I could say so much to you—only it is all confused—& will not word *[sic]*. Only I'm ever your grateful

S^t^.—(minimus.)—M.

Letter 138

Denmark Hill.
S. E.

[Late January, 1870][77]

Dearest Isola,

I'm not coming ashore to day there's rough work to be done out on the lake—: this is only to thank you for being so beyond everything to my poor wee pussie.

I've watched her reviving and spreading out her little tussels and playfulnesses,—just as a tress of seaweed does when the water gets to it again—after it has been lying weary.

My lectures are giving me great trouble. I have to think over so many things before saying *one*,—and it's so difficult to say all one wants in any clear order.—And the weather has been—just for these important two months—the worst possible—when I ought to have been out in the air every day—I Have been shrivelled like a sour apple in a cupboard,—wits—will—& courage—all at once.

However I think there will be enough in them to be of use.

Love and thanks—exceedingly—to William also.

Ever your poor Crusoe.

S^{t} C.

[77] That this letter was written close in time to the one immediately following is clear from references in both to Joan's recent visit and to the difficulty over the lectures, and from the signature "Crusoe."

Letter 139

Denmark Hill.
S. E.
Saturday. [29 January 1870][78]

Dearest Isola

I am anxious about you, hearing what pain and over-care was on you when Joanna left. She has been telling me the loveliest things and bringing me loveliest flowers and leaves,—and being a perfect little alabaster vase of healing brought from you—for me;—(and she is *so* much better herself!) But I cannot write any play to day, for I am tired—the time having come when it is needful that I do all I can in my morning writing,—sometimes I cannot in my present state—(I do not say—"command," but) find anything in, my mind—even when I know there *is* something if I could get at it,—then I waste hours in vain,—constructing all wrong for want of the right *one* clue, lost, in numbness. But, though not what I thought I could have made them—or in any wise what they should have been—the lectures[79] will contain more than most people could have told,—and I may the better maintain general character that the first are not too highly finished.

When I know that you are well I will write of several things. Dear love and thanks to William.

Ever your loving S[t] C.

Crusoe, you know—now—always.

Joan's in town, or would send *much* love.

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[78] The date on the envelope of this letter.

[79] *Lectures on Art.*

Letter 140

Denmark Hill.
S. E.

6th February. 1870

My dearest Isola

You will be glad to know that I am keeping fairly well, and am in hopes of being fit enough for my Tuesday's work.[80] It is not nearly what it should have been—owing partly to the East Wind & Fog,—which kept me from walking (and all best thought comes to me when I'm in open air)—but chiefly because of that unlucky child—the three weeks work after that[81] had all to be done again—they were so stupid with the pain. I have not got over it, nor shall,—but it has got itself into a lump, now—which I can throw into a corner out of the way at work times instead of mixing itself all through me. She made me more angry than I was before by this ineffably stupid &—everything thats bad—letter. I had'nt looked at it since. It does'nt read so *very* bad—today. Only it's of no use being angry with living creatures any more than with the east wind, but one *is*, and then, even little Joan disappointed me heavily—(but don't tell her, for the world.)—I thought it so senseless of her—getting actual hold of the creature for ever so long—and letting her go without telling her a word of the truth, about her selfishness or cruelty.—She might, you know, meeting by chance—like that. Give me some praise for making no use whatever of the knowledge Joan had of her address—for fear of blame coming to you, or rather—because I knew you trusted Joan knowing that I might be trusted also. But it was difficult not to send her some abuse. She *shall* have it—hot—one day, if we both live. What do you think she means by underlining her name. Does she do so usually?

---

[80] The inaugural lecture at Oxford.

[81] The meeting of Ruskin and Rose at the Royal Academy (see Letter 133).

All which it is of no use to write, to make you uncomfortable—except that I like you to know what I am really feeling—& I think it is better so—in the end,—also—I'm provoked that I can't send you any nice little French poems—or fancies,—being frozen this way.

Write Care of Dr Acland[82]

Oxford

But don't send me back this horrid thing—till I've got home again.

Ever your loving St C.

[82] Henry Wentworth Acland (1815-1900), who attended Christ Church with Ruskin and became his lifelong friend. Acland was a distinguished medical man who was appointed Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford in 1858; he did much for the cause of public health in England and was created baronet in 1890. Acland also advanced the study of art and archeology at the university and wrote on the topography of the Troad. Ruskin has left a delightful portrait of this versatile man in *Praeterita* (*Works*, XXXV, 206-8).

Oxford. 8th February [1870][83]

My dearest Isola

Thank you for little comforting letter written in pain. The inaug. lecture has been rightly given, I think, & whatever may now happen, I have been permitted by the Fates to begin the teaching of Art to the Universities of England.

Joan has been enjoying herself.

Ever, my dearest Isola

Your loving St C.

All love to William, I'll send him a report—if there's a good one.

[83] The year is determined by the reference to Ruskin's inaugural lecture at Oxford.

Letter 142

The University Galleries.
Oxford.

11th Febʸ 1870.

My dearest Isola

I want you to see my official notepaper—Are'nt we grand! —but its too thick to write any of ones little heart upon. I like paper to be like leaves—about—in thickness, for writing to anyone I like to write to. Not that I've got anybody but you & Joan—& Little Connie, who has been very good lately to me, too.

The flowers were lovely,—I'm rather too black just now for them—but I liked their coming.

—I'm going home tomorrow, until Tuesday—so you may send me that letter back—not that it's much worth postage. I'm very well—I think the second lecture will be pretty good also. I hav'nt often (about any common thing)—been in such a passion as I was with the Pallmall[84] for cutting out nearly all the important parts of the lecture, because they told against their set—and cramming me—full of misprints—into a bye corner, and an ugly corner too—But I believe the Clarendon people will print the whole corner—& then you'll like a bit here & there, I know.

Ever your loving Sᵗ C.

Don't write if you're still in pain (—but I trust not.)—

[84] The *Pall Mall Gazette* reported the inaugural lecture on February 9, 1870.

Letter 143

Denmark Hill.
S. E.
13th February. 1869 [1870][85]

My dear little island,

Well, of course your "cold" does'nt matter—if it's only a cold—nor any body dies neither, but *your* cold would matter very much to me—as well as other people's (—Acted?) cold, —if it got worse.

Yes. That's all very lovely—and you know so well how vain we poor men are—and should like to be thought of in a St Michaelesque attitude. But it does one good—in spite of one —though one sees through the cunning of it—you naughty. Dear little Joan has been behaving like a Sta Michaeline (I forget the right feminine)—and a darling—and a little golden St Michael's orange—all sweetness and balm. She would'nt be a bit melancholy yesterday—though—would you believe it she had—literally—weddingbells ringing in her ears several times during the day. *Literally,*—"Not *Real* ones" as poor Nancy said of the Coffins.[86]—But Joanna is a little witch—of your species—and far out of my way—towards celestial quarters.

—Judgment indeed! And blessing people at it! I should like to hear myself doing anything of the kind! (Would'nt I do the other thing—if it were the least use?)

Do you know your Dickens?—Miss Flite—and her expectations of Judgment?[87]—Above all—Do you know your Dante. Have you read all? Do you know Who everybody is?—*Where* everybody is? I want much to know if you do.

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[85] Both from the salutation, which Ruskin did not adopt until early in 1870, and from the reference to Joan's state of mind, it seems highly likely that Ruskin misdated this letter 1869. And the wedding bells Joan claimed to hear doubtless refer to the marriage of her former suitor, Percy La Touche, to Lady Annette Scott, on February 9, 1870.

[86] *Oliver Twist*, chap. xlvi.

[87] *Bleak House.*

I think in spite of islands—and coral—bells—and coaxing—I should go away and rest—if it were not for that one line "Che fece per vilta il gran rifiuto"[88] and a dim—ever so dim—remnant of desire to help still other people a little.

But the lectures are coming into some good form—you will like some bits—but alas—how you *will* be disgusted at others!

Thank William for his nice letter. What does he mean by telling me there are good times coming?

I am better however. Joan says your letter was "inspired." (I told her—that I might read your letter to her—and it took her thoughts a little aside, also.)

—Ever your grateful S[t] C.

[88] "Who made through cowardice the great refusal" (*Inferno* iii. 60).

Letter 144

Oxford

16th February. 1870

My dearest Isola

It is a soft clear afternoon at last, and there's some sunshine and I like thinking of you, and I wonder where you are. Please be good and write me a little tiny isolated bit of comfort—to Denmark Hill.

I've got my second lecture given nicely—everybody heard—and they say everybody is likely to be pleased. There were some bits that I really wanted Isola to hear—so they *must* have been nice. You know—any good I can do is *all* Isola's doing—I know I should have been under the snow—somewhere, just now—but for her.

I am not tired, neither, which is curious—considering how much more than usual I am trying to do.—Still—I cannot understand how anybody who has always things to do, and is responsible to people, or for people—can exist at all—William & you, for instance.

—I wish I could go on chattering—wait till I'm at Verona again—& you'll be tired enough of registered letters. I'm not going to let you escape as you did the Como one, any more.

Ever your loving St C.

Letter 145

Denmark Hill.
S. E.

19th Feb. [1870][89]

My dearest Isola

I was obliged to come up to town for two days, and Joan thinks it just possible that you might be able to come out to afternoon tea tomorrow. I wish you could, for Flo is here with her sister, and she has long wanted to see you that I should like to give her the delight, at last, if it at all is contrivable. If you can come, just send me a little telegram of Yes, that I may have the happiness of expecting you through my forenoon walk. *Please* come, for I am very sad—& need a look of yours.—William too, if he can?

Ever your loving St C.

You must come at least as early as five for Joan has a dinner! nominally at 7, and I've to go!

[89] The salutation suggests this letter was written no earlier than 1870. Also, a letter to F. S. Ellis in *Works*, XXXVII, 638, suggests Ruskin is going to London, from Oxford, on February 17, 1870.

Letter 146

Denmark Hill.
S. E.

[February, 1870][90]

My dearest Isola,

I'm like to go "distracted" myself—for that distracted letter has never reached me—Of all letters, to be the one to miss. Can it have gone to Oxford—no—I should have had it there. Are you sure you sent it?

—To day—except that you've caught cold—is delicious—If you'll come and sit in the garden—& look into the study sometimes—just that I may remember Aracoeli—I'll never go & live anywhere but at Denmark Hill.

Ever your loving S[t] C.

I'm so glad William heard some good of me.

[90] It seems clear from Letter 147 that Ruskin has received the letter he mentions here as not having reached him. Letters 146 and 147 are further connected by the repetition of the word "distracted."

Letter 147

Denmark Hill.
S. E.

23rd February. 1870[91]

Dearest Isola

She has come back to me. She will not leave me any more. "If my love is any sunshine to you take it—& keep it."

—I may not yet see her—not even write. But with you, and her both—(loving?) me—I may be content—I think! I rather rejoice in the thought of the far-away—dream-worship I must render to you both. She says she had *not* gone away. All I know, is—if I had'nt had an Isola—that did'nt disappear in mist—she would have had no St C to come back to. Yes—I got the tiresome child's letter—It is I that was "distracted." And now—Joan says—you are so ill and suffering. I *am* so sorry—It's all for helping *me*—And I have so much to do—and am a little giddy besides & confused—as you may think —and I don't know how to do you any good—and you have been all good to me.

Please get better—& come here.

Ever your loving St C.

[91] From the chronology of correspondence given by Ruskin himself in Letter 151, it would seem that he misdated Letter 147. In all probability it can be dated no earlier than February 24 because the letter from Rose referred to here was not received before that date.

Letter 148

[Late February, 1870][92]

Dearest Isola

Thanks for being angry for me.

But I am getting much good. A grievous time today however. No letter from Ireland.

Ever your S[t] C.

[92] The conjectural date is based on a period of relative harmony between Rose and Ruskin at this time; despite his statement in Letter 147 that he may "not even write," Ruskin did receive letters from Rose, as *Diaries*, II, 694, indicates.

Letter 149

Denmark Hill.
S. E.

28th February 1870

Dearest Isola—

Are you really in town?—And are you better?—And will you come?—And will you care for me—even now when I'm not so unhappy? You know—it will still be difficult to keep me quite good—in this lovely feeding on—the West Wind and its Spirit. It's better than the East—but I can't do without my sweet South—and breath of the violets of England.

I send you some thoughts of her Future.

Ever your *so* loving—St C.

Denmark Hill,
S. E.

Oxford. Thursday
[March 10, 1870] [93]

My dearest Isola

I've got my two lovely little notes. It's a shame of me to teaze you when you are tired—but if I did'nt—you might think—I did'nt want to—so I always will when I need help.

The two little notes are lovely and put me all right this morning—I hope the wind won't be east at all—on Saturday.

Fifth lecture yesterday went very well, I think.

Ever your loving S[t] C.

I'm wondering so if that child has said anything about it to you—or written, since—But I don't ask—you know—But I think *she* must be a little least bit happier.

[93] The date is derived from the textual reference to the fifth lecture of the *Lectures on Art*, which was given by Ruskin at Oxford on March 9, 1870.

Letter 151

Denmark Hill. S. E.

20th March. 1870.

My dearest Isola

I suppose it's all that impatience of mine—which makes me naughty—No—you could'nt have asked to see the letter,—and been quite nice—but then I don't want you always to be quite nice—I want you to be a little weak, & rude—and foolish —and more like me. You're ever so much *too* nice.

Well—this was how it happened—Just a month since—on Saturday, 19th February—I had left my study for a few minutes, & was hunting upstairs for something I had lost—& came down dreamily & was going to my place—at the table. And —There was a letter on the table which made me start as if it had been a snake—So I looked at it—& looked—and took it up—thinking there *must* be somebody else who wrote like that. And it had the postmark I knew so well.

So I took it to the chimneypiece & leaned against that—& looked at it still—

At last I got it opened—& it had the thick paper inside—with the star.

And it began—"Dear St C."

Well—It was'nt *much* better than the one before[94]—and it was more absurd—if possible.—For it was to ask "if all was at peace" between us!—and to say she was'nt quite happy till she knew it was so—: and if I could say anything that would make her happy—I might write—before 5 P.M. But if I did'nt write—she "would think all was well and be content."

So I *did* write—before 5. P.M.—and gave her a little insight into some of my "peace."—Which—whether it "made her happy" or not—I do not know—but I did not intend it should.

[94] Possibly a reference to the letter from Rose mentioned in Letter 140 as "this ineffably stupid &—everything thats bad—letter."

Among other things I told her the dedication I meant to put to these Oxford lectures—not in public—but in her copy, —which I meant to send her—you know, in exchange for those she had the impertinence to send me—at the New Year —And this was to have been the inscription

"To the woman,
Who bade me trust in God, and her,
And taught me
The cruelty of Religion
And the vanity of Trust,
This—my life's most earnest work
Which—without her rough teaching,
Would have been done in ignorance of these things
Is justly dedicate."

—Besides telling her this—I accused her of several things—perjury—& the like—And I told her how happy I was—and how the only thing that kept me from being perfectly happy was—that I could not help loving her still.

So the letter went—& Monday came—& no answer—and Tuesday, & none—and I had to go to Oxford—& give the third lecture—and on the Thursday my letters came from home to Oxford and there was none. And so I came home on Thursday afternoon—and went in to my mothers room—& then into the study—and there was a pile of about eight or ten letters on it—I turned them over slowly—one by one—and it[95] was the undermost! It was square—& felt fearfully *thin*—and I thought all was over—So I took it up to my room—& shut myself in—

And when I opened it, I saw—not the star but a little red and green and golden rose. And this was what was written—if I do not dream.

"I will trust you.

I do love you. I have loved you, though the shadows that have come between us could not but make me fear you and

[95] Ruskin notes the reception of this letter in *Diaries*, II, 694, under entry of February 24, 1870. See also Letter 147.

turn from you—I love you, & shall love you always, always—& you can make this mean what you will.

I have doubted your love. I have wished not to love you. I have thought you unworthy, yet—as surely as I believe God loves you, as surely as my trust is in His Love.

I love you—still, and always.

Do not doubt this any more.

I believe God meant us to love each other, yet life—and it seems God's will has divided us.

My father & mother forbid my writing to you, and I cannot continue to do so in secret. It seems to be God's will that we should be separated, and yet—"thou art ever with me." If my love can be any sunshine to you—take—and keep it. And now —may I say God bless you? God, who is Love—lead—guide, & bless us both.

Ever, dearest S^{t} C.

Your loving

Rose."

—I did not answer—I was afraid of doing some mischief—of my letter's by any mischance getting into wrong hands—I don't know if she expected me to answer—If she did—I've "expected" things too,—sometimes.

—I am *very* anxious about Joanna—she has a violent feverish cold—I have been unwell all this last week with face-ache & sorethroat—but have got through—& am better today.

I think you must have the rough sketch of the island at present—You'll have to wait many a day—if I don't finish it till I'm happy—There's a little light in it—as it is—if you put it in a very dark corner—I'll send it you.

Ever your loving S^{t} C.

† I'm all wrong—*now*.—I think it will have to be Easter Sunday—if that would do?—I'll write again tonight.

Denmark Hill,
S. E.

6th April [1870][96]

This is no thanks—
—only to say—day by
day I will try to thank you.

My dearest Isola,

No one need think of his life as an unhappy one—who has ever received such words as these of yours from one so good—Though indeed, *but* from one so good, how *could* they come. What can *I* say,—for so much.

I *must* come for a day—Would from Tuesday to Thursday of Easter† week—next week is'nt it—

I'm so dreamy—I've got Clouds & light—But not directed in her hand—Poor thing—how she is wasting her sweet soul.

Ever your grateful St C.

I've been working to put myself quiet—and am *so* tired. Your letter was a great blessing to me this morning.

[96] A very likely date in view of Ruskin's reference in the letter to Rose La Touche's slender volume of devotional prose and poetry, *Clouds and Light*, which was published in London in 1870.

Letter 153

Denmark Hill.
S. E.

[April 19-20, 1870][97]

Dearest Isola

The thought of what I might have—if I came—helps me—more than anything else could. The perfectness of it would be too great for me—Rest, I could of course—delightfully—and silently, but *think* I could not, of anything but you, and,—tiresome thing that you are—to haunt one so—why could'nt I have been content to love something on earth.—It just would make me forget everything—and I have failed too utterly largely[?] in getting the harmony and order that I meant & planned in the Oxford things, & have to change and lose—at the last—enough—without losing myself altogether in Irish clouds and Isola light.

—Joanna comes home, I hope on Thursday—then on Tuesday I take her, and Connie, and Connie's mother, M^rs^ Hilliard—and my gardener—to Paris, where neither M^rs^ Hilliard nor Downes have ever been before,—and where I think they will all be happy.[98] Then on Friday or Saturday to Geneva—and so over Simplon—and on the other side of the Simplon, because it will be near Isola Bella. I mean directly to ask C^t^ Borromeo to let me have some land—he's sure to have some crags & fields Simplon way—I only want a few acres, and then—*[text mutilated]* really begin.

I know William would have welcomed me; If I trusted him less, perhaps I should speak of him oftener. Whenever I've anything useful in my head, I'll write to him about it, first.

[97] The tour mentioned in the letter suggests the date ascribed. The exact day of departure was Tuesday, April 26, 1870 (*Diaries*, II, 694). And Ruskin's reference to Joan's return "on Thursday" (April 21) dates the letter before that day, almost certainly on one of the two days ascribed.

[98] For the route taken on this tour see *Works*, XX, xlix.

You know, if she wrote those books for *me,* she oughtn't to dedicate them to Edithe[99] and people I never heard of. But it is not that. It is the forming of her mind permanently in the fatal dream and narrow furrow of thought,—just when I could have formed it so differently.

—I must'nt whine

Ever your poor loving S[t] C.

[99] To whom Rose La Touche's *Clouds and Light* was dedicated.

Letter 154

Pisa, 1st July, 1870.

My dearest Isola,—I wonder what you have been thinking of me. It is not because I had people with me that I have not written, but because the various work and pain of this year have put me in a temper in which no pleasant thoughts ever come to me, such as I should choose to write to you; but on the other hand I have not been suffering much—except from my old grievances about pictures and buildings, for I am compelled to think of them now nearly all day long, and my life is mere inquiry and deliberation. I have only had some good to tell you yesterday, and this morning having found great part of the Pisan buildings safe, and the little chapel of the Virgine della Rosa at Lucca—so I write to you. I have learned much on this journey, and hope to tell things in the autumn at Oxford that will be of great use, having found a Master of the religious schools at Florence, Filippo Lippi,[100] new to me, though often seen by me, without seeing, in old times, though I had eyes even then for some sights. But this Filippo Lippi has brought me into a new world, being a complete monk, yet an entirely noble painter. Luini is lovely, but not monkish. Lippi is an Angelico with Luini's strength, or perhaps more, only of earlier date, and with less knowledge. I came on to Florence from Venice feeling anxious about many of these things, and am glad that I have. I have been drawing little but thinking much, and to some good purpose. Will you send me a line to the Giessbach? I am very weary in the innermost of me, into which, you will see, there is more

[100] Actually, Ruskin says very little indeed about Fra Lippo Lippi in his Michaelmas Term lectures in 1870 at Oxford. These lectures, under the title *Aratra Pentelici*, are in *Works*, XX, 181 ff.

surrender perhaps than there used to be, and even a comparative peace; but my plans have been broken much by this work and I am languid with unfollowed purposes. We are on our way home. This is not a letter, but only that you may know why I do not write. Love to William always.

Ever your affectionate St. C.

Letter 155

Denmark Hill.
S. E.

5th August. 1870

My dearest Isola

Are you yet in town, and would you like to come with William and dine with me quietly any day—when you needed rest?—I have little to show you—little to say—finding myself more and more in a dreary weariness, from which I rouse a little if something must be done—and into which a thought sometimes finds its way,—but very slowly. Still, I have enough to tell you of the last three months—to last through one evening, if you will come.

Love to William always

Ever your affectionate St C.

Joanna is gone to Scotland—like other people.

Letter 156

Denmark Hill.
S. E.

9th August. 1870.

My dearest Isola,

Don't you think it is time you should give up "scuffling"—What can you possibly say to yourself about bazaars, to justify the fretwork of them?

I am not writing to you, because my work is very material and cold just now—and I am myself in a more or less degraded state of feeling† and almost unconscious of what is better in me—while I live in this strange dream, of possessing and *not* possessing.

—Sometimes I think that all my old thoughts are going to pass away—and that I am to live a mechanical life—for a little while & so end. Then—I ask myself how I should feel if R or Isola were dead—and then I find that all I am able to do is still theirs, even when I am not thinking of them. I never think of either of you now when I can possibly help it—but am nevertheless.

Ever your loving St C.

† I mean—I'm interesting myself in potatoes, & celery, and pigs—and everything that I can that's gross and horrid. Will you come & see me? such? [*sic*]

Letter 157

Denmark Hill.
S. E.

12th [August, 1870][101]

Dear φιλη

I said I would write to day—but I am very weary—my mother—for want of Joanna, without knowing it—is much more nervous and makes me so, necessarily; and I find it difficult to get on at present—and I can't come away to you while she is like this.

I've been very cross all day too about that speech of William's about education. Spiritual people should know better. Of course if you compel people to be educated—you must pay for their education. They pay *you* just as your child pays you—by being good—If there is any money payment—it is in raspberry-tart funds *from* you—not by the child to you.

But I like those hymns. They are very lovely. Available for Anybody, who is trying any good.

Ever your affect. St C.

[101] The conjectural date is based partly on the textual reference to Joan's absence, which is mentioned in Letter 155 as well. Furthermore, Ruskin's comment on "that speech of William's about education" is evidently an allusion to a speech, concerning the Elementary Education Bill, delivered by Cowper-Temple on July 22, 1870. Not surprisingly, Cowper-Temple's interest was primarily in the religious issues attendant upon this legislation.

Letter 158

Denmark Hills, S. E.
9th October [1870][102]

My dear φιλη

I've been looking at the seal this morning—and I think it horribly ugly—and I hate Hebrew—and tell R—*from yourself*—which I'm sure you may—that prosper is spelt with a p, and not with an f.

And of all texts that never come true and there are plenty—heaven knows—that's about the interest in all the past and present. From the day of Tears on Olivet to the death of St Louis,—which was the greatest calamity that happened to the cause of good in all the middle ages.

Tell R not to be a little fool—No you wont tell her that from yourself. But, if I don't make her little ears tingle yet—there will be sad silence—somewhere—for one of us.

Thank you for those lines—but did you remember where they came from? *I* am most likely going to Germany too—to study agates at Oberstein—I would get near her—only it might come to the end of Maude[103] indeed. Well, there are warnings enough against anger—from the Iliad till now—and I'll be very quiet,—only, if I don't get a word or two said to that Lacerta—one day—that will make her ears tingle—my tongue will be as much in need of dew to cool it as ever Dives' was.

Love to φιηος. Make Rose put her accent on properly.

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[102] The year ascribed is highly conjectural. Since Ruskin does not address Mrs. Cowper-Temple as φιλη consistently before March, 1868, it is likely that that year or later would be possible as a date. Actually, on October 9, 1868, Ruskin was out of the country; on that date in 1871 he was in Lichfield; and by late 1872 he was living at Brantwood. Thus, either 1869 or 1870 would probably be the year, and the tenor of the letter suggests the latter. So, with considerable reservation and very little convincing evidence, 1870 is the year ventured.

[103] Tennyson's poem.

I spent all yesterday in visiting museums and institutions—made two speeches extempore—and had tea with Rose's cousin. (Miss Cole—I've got *her* safe, at any rate—& made some way with her mother,) and with a middle aged Miss La Touche, of another branch, a very noble person—quakerlike in severity—but graceful. We got on fairly—I fancied her studiously cold—but it may be her manner at first.

Letter 159

Denmark Hill.
S. E.

2nd January. 1871.

My dearest Isola,

You have my first letter,—the second will be to Smith and Elder with first sheets of the new edition of all my books,—to be bound nicely, and begin a new order of things.

Send me a line now—anyhow—to say how you are—and whether you are ready for any thing desperate—Politically & Economically,—if William will let you—of course I can't expect *him* to be desperate—but my love to him.

Ever your loving
St C.

Letter 160

Denmark Hill, 10th Jan., 1871.

My dearest Isola,—I am grieved to have made you write when you were so sorely burdened, but I needed the letter greatly. It is a great comfort to me to see you really out of patience at last. I think perhaps if Job's wife had been patient, it *would* have been too much for him. Yes, we'll do something desperate directly now—only it's very cold, and difficult to get one's courage up for anything *quite* over head and ears. But we'll really take the centre arch presently, I daresay we shall have to go very slowly up stream at first; William will run along the bank in a greatly alarmed state. I'll send you *Fors Clavigera*[104] when I get the second number out, and then the crocuses and things will be getting their heads up, and we'll get ours.

There ought to be a letter of mine in the *Telegraph*[105] to-morrow; please look. I am almost in a fever myself. Would you come and nurse me if I got into—just a very little one, so as not to be troublesome, but only to want some orange juice and things? It's no use telling you if you won't. Joan's always away now, somewhere. Seriously, I've got so utterly savage that it has done me good, only I'm greatly tired—but not out of heart—and it *is* so nice *your* being "desperate" (Spirits and lilies and all). Ever your loving

St. C.

[104] Whose publication commenced in January, 1871. The insignia on the title page is a rose.

[105] He refers to a letter about the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris that appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* on January 19, 1871. It is reprinted in *Works*, XXXIV, 503.

Denmark Hill.
S. E.

11th Febr. [1871][106]

My dear William,

I have been great part of the time since I returned from Oxford admiring and taking delight in the flower[s] and birds —both exquisite. I was just in time to see the lovely arrangement of the flowers, and I have sent one pheasant to Oxford —pulled ever so many feathers out of the others wings—and am proceeding to dine upon him.

Please look over and return me the enclosed from Froude. It is the end of it I want you to notice—you see that he has darker thoughts and more perfect fears than I.

The beginning of the letter is however more frightful to me. I know much evil of England, but not the possibility of such a thing being uttered as this of Palgraves.[107]

Ever your affectionate
St C.

[106] This appears to be the only year Ruskin was at Denmark Hill on February 11 immediately upon his return from Oxford, which he mentions in this letter.

[107] Francis Turner Palgrave (1824-97), critic and educational officer. He was of the circle of Arnold and Clough at Balliol and was subsequently elected Fellow of Exeter College. Palgrave was an assistant private secretary to Gladstone and later spent many years in a government department of education. A friend of Tennyson, an art and literary critic as well as a poet of modest abilities, Palgrave is perhaps best remembered for the "Golden Treasury" anthology. He occupied the chair of poetry at Oxford from 1885-95.

Letter 162

Abingdon
25th March. [1871][108]

My dear William

Please put address on enclosed,—the letter sent me has none. I am coming to town for a fortnight now—if Isola & you would like to come & look at the flowers—there are some pretty little blossoms about here and there on the walls.

Ever affectionately Yours,
J Ruskin.

[108] The year is based on Ruskin's reference in *Diaries*, II, 710, under entry of March 26, 1871, to having "returned home yesterday." While lecturing at Oxford it was his habit—frequently in 1870 and 1871—to stay for a few days at the Crown and Thistle in Abingdon, and this accounts for the letterhead. The floral references also connect this letter to Letter 161.

Letter 163

Abingdon, 25th. May, '71.

My dearest φιλη,—Do you really think scythes were never whetted nor set against swathes of grass "under the hawthorn in the dale," before patent farming? All that is alleged against such labour is by the absurd over-workers of modern trade. I have swept dew away with the edge, before now, myself. I should have been wiser and happier if I had kept my own lawn smooth daily. I want to see Mr. Harris more than he can possibly want to see me. I'll make him [*sic*] my way across the country to you on Saturday evening, somehow, and stay till Tuesday morning.

Yes, I saw what was to be in the New Forest, and thought that both were happy, beyond most.

I don't in the least believe you'll come to Utopia, so you needn't pretend you will, but I'm ever your loving

St. C.

Letter 164

Matlock. 1st June
71

My dear William

I am very grateful for your letter. Yesterday I wrote to Mr Martineau, and to my cousin, Mr W. G. Richardson, who was once a lawyer, (and is now a West India merchant and Cambridge student!)—and who when I told him the Father's question, instantly proposed a reference to indisputable legal authority as essential. I have desired him to act with Mr Martineau and to obtain whatever interpretation of the decree may be final, from the proper sources.

It would indeed destroy both health and usefulness, if I allowed hopes to return such as I had once. I wish that they *could* return—if they were allowed—but I have been too often & too sorely betrayed to trust, or hope, more; and even if all should be determined favourably, as regards the legal question, I shall only request that, with the Bishops aid and influence, you would undeceive Rose as to the points of unjust evilspeaking against me. I am very weary of life;—and will not ask her to come to me.—If she wants to come, she must say so to me,—nor *can* she yet—say so, wisely until she understands a little what sort of life she must in that case join. I have pledged myself now publicly to many things—in my own mind, I am resolved on many more. I will not in one jot interrupt my work for her. I have to prepare an entire scheme of elementary teaching for the lower school at Oxford, at once, and to be sure that the schools can be opened with it complete, in October; after I have got this done, I am going with Mr Goodwin[109] to Venice & Verona, to get some pieces of

[109] Albert Goodwin, a relatively unknown Victorian artist who accompanied Ruskin to Italy in 1872. Goodwin's name appears occasionally in Ruskin's writings and on one occasion at least, in an appendix to *The Art of England* (*Works*, XXXIII, 405), he takes a drubbing for his moralistic contributions to the Old Water-Colour Exhibition. Goodwin assisted Ruskin during the latter's illness at Matlock in July, 1871.

colour there for the last time that it will be possible—then, at Christmas all my accounts must be made clear, selling the pictures I don't want, and fixing my future rate of expenditure —which must be a low one.

Then, Rose will be able to judge whether she would like to come & help or not. If she means to have the option, I should insist on her corresponding with me freely in the meantime, otherwise I will have nothing more to do with her. However much a man may love a woman, he cannot be twice left to die, (if he chooses)—and then be asked to prove that he is not a villain!—and yet obey the whistle as he did once.

I have heard of a house in Wales which I think may do for me—whatever does or does not happen—it is very small—but has a little land, and a stream.

I will soon tell you more about it.

Love always to you both.

Ever your affect^{t}. S^{t} C.

Letter 165

Abingdon

6th June [1871][110]

My dear William

I am so grateful for your letter—the moment Phile and you can fix your day, please tell me that I may have the pleasure of looking forward to it.

Phile knows my great pet Connie,—she and her sister and their father & mother[111] are staying with me just now—they are all so nice I do wish you could come soon while they are still here.

—I am deeply interested about Mr Harris—Yes, the organization of labour is everything—or the foundation of everything.

Ever your loving St C.

[110] From *Works*, XXXVII, it is apparent that Ruskin was at Oxford on June 6, 1871, and was probably staying at Abingdon while lecturing at the university. The reference here and in Letter 163 to a Mr. Harris also serves to substantiate the year ascribed.

[111] The Reverend and Mrs. J. C. Hilliard and their two daughters, Constance and Ethel.

Letter 166

Matlock 7th June
1871

My dear William

I think you will be pleased to see the enclosed letter. I hope, in the course of next week, you will have all the documents, and be able to form whatever judgments you & the Bishop can finally act upon. You say she is probably too ill to decide at once. *I* am too ill also—and I hope—too wise. I am not going to offer—still less to urge—marriage, now. But I insist on free intercourse—face to face. She never understands my letters.

What I want you and the Bishop to do is to insist on being allowed to put the facts before her, so that we may not be separated by lies; (—and *those* so unworthy of all against whom they are used—so foul to put into the childs heart—so vile, to charge a man with when toiling for the good of others with all his strength). When she knows—& understands all—she is to decide at once,—I mean in three days at the utmost—whether she will see me or not.

I will not go to Ireland. You won't mind asking her to Broadlands? Let her come there and talk to me.

After that, if she will, I want her to *feel* a little of my quiet life—by coming to stay with Joan a week or two—in the house in which I passed my happy childhood.[112] If she will not come, I close—irrevocably—all relations with her—come of it what will.

—I am still very unwell but better, and at the level of beeftea—I think I shall get that child to like her dinner again, if Phile orders it for her.

Ever your grateful
John Ruskin

[112] Herne Hill, where Joan Agnew and her husband, Arthur Severn, married in April, 1871, went to live.

That's an important notion of yours about pulpits—Very fine & right—and orthodox—old—Catholic.

But—W^{m} dear, we must give up preaching—& take to—showing the way.

Letter 167

Denmark Hill.
S. E.
Waterloo day. [June 18] 1871

My dearest William

Yesterday evening I made search, at once; and found the documents which I send you herewith; you may perhaps like to see my Father's account of the matter; and if you will glance at the passages underlined now, by me, in the lawyers letters, they will also help you to form at least your own conclusions more pleasantly. You will see that the lawyers advised me not to look at the depositions, and I did not—and have no copy of the judgment but of course that is easily obtained. I have also written to John Simon today, to come and determine my bodily health. I have just spoken to my mother about it—in respect of mere age and feebleness—she says my blood is so pure that I should have perfectly healthy children—having never touched a woman, and being of pure descent, (especially my mothers constitution being strangely vigourous).

It is curious however, that the annilizing [*sic*] of all this evil, and the being obliged to prove that I am not a villain, has a deadly effect on my general thoughts and increases whatever feeling of indignation or separateness existed previously.

I shall write now to my best lawyer friend, to get copy of judgment.

Letter just came from John Simon, enclosed.

Love to φιλη
Ever your grateful
JR.

Letter 168

Denmark Hill.
S. E.

23rd June 71

Dearest Isola,

The sun is shining—divinely this morning—and I feel just able for a tiny before-breakfast letter.—There is the most comic aptness in the perpetual disappointments that come on me—whenever I begin to think of any one I care for, except you—last night you know I was to see the Bp of Limerick—dine with him—and talk of things.

The dinner was to be at the Athenaeum which I thought odd—but I went there & sate two hours—from seven to nine—in the corner looking out on the plunging rain up Waterloo place—and he never came.

—And my work had been spoiled all the day before.

—How curiously wrong most of our notions of old far away scenes and people are; for instance, Read Milton's fancy of Dalilah in the Agonistes. Not that many people are as stupid as Milton—in such matters. Still—one *does* fancy—generally—Dalilah to have been a rather tall, rather round limbed, rather boldfaced,—and rather wicked person—with black hair & eyes. I know, now, quite, what she was. She *was* rather tall. She was very narrow-waisted—& very shy, and had the *trim*mest little sweet knot of golden hair at the back of her head. And she had grey eyes—and was *so* good—so very good—and always did as her people bid her.

I tell you what it is, Isola.—I'll have a Bureau des demolitions at the house of Diane de Poitiers—and Irish oak "au poids"—if this goes on much longer. I can't afford to be blinded, of all things. I shall go off to Venice, with the gates of Gaza on my back—and paint you another Island.

Ever your lovingest St C.

[5 July 1871][113]

My dear William

Thank you for the letter of yesterday—and for its encouragement in the line I mean to follow,—though it has not prospered hitherto, for, do what I will, the gnawing anxiety has upset digestion & everything else and I get out of bed to write this,—and to enclose this half letter of my lawyer Cousins[114]—on the fly leaf was a statement of the question clearly put, which I have revised, and sent back to be immediately submitted to Counsel.

Try and see lady Desart.[115] She and I had a long correspondence—and all seemed to be going well between us, when she suddenly stopped. The ways I am *teased* as well as grieved in it all are very strange. Love to Phile. Ever your grateful

S[t] C.

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[113] The envelope for this letter is so dated.

[114] W. C. Richardson.

[115] The wife of the 3rd Earl of Desart; the latter was an Oxford friend of Ruskin's and also the half-brother of Mrs. La Touche. From an unpublished letter of Ruskin's written in September, 1870, it is quite clear that Lady Desart knew a great deal about his relations with Rose.

Letter 170

Matlock

23rd July 71.

My dear William

I sent by yesterday's post the final legal opinion, for your support.

By today's post, I have written straight & simply to R. herself telling her all is ascertained & safe, and that you and Phile, and her aunt—and others—if she chooses, will tell her that I deserve her trust.

The rest of the letter was merely a quiet statement of what I told you I should say; that she must now correspond with me—and rationally determine if it will be advisable to marry or not.

So now I count on you two and the Bishop to support me with her, if needful.

I am not in the least agitated or anxious in this.

My plans are for far greater things than my own poor love, now,—but if, wisely, it can now be fulfilled, I think it will help all my purposes—not least in recovered honour before all the world—and of course in peace of heart.

I'm getting stronger every hour—Thanks to Phile & you for helping me at the worst need.

Ever your loving
St C.

Letter 171

Ivatt's New Bath Hotel
Matlock Bath.
Thursday [July 27, 1871][116]

Dearest Isola

Thanks for the letter—and for your "notes"—but I am partly at pause—wondering if William has got my letter of Sunday; —he may be anxious about legal matters for me and not have spoken of it to you. Send me a little line here—if you can, tomorrow, saying if he has seen, or heard from, the Bishop.

I have been all the morning on a rocky hillside covered with wild roses and *creeping* St John's wort. It's very humiliating to me, it is so very low all round the feet of the roses.

I'm going out again to paint a spray of rose against a rock. If it comes rightly it will be pretty.

Ever your loving S[t] C.

[116] The textual reference to "my letter of Sunday" (i.e., Letter 170) yields the date ascribed.

PART V

Part V

Letters 172 to 234

July 27, 1871—May 30, [1888]

THE FINAL PART of this correspondence is richly diverse. It was in the middle of 1871 that Ruskin, soon after his illness at Matlock, brought to fruition an idea that had long been germinating: the foundation of the Guild of St. George. Its goals, ideals, and bases of operation are stated in approximately a dozen letters to the Cowper-Temples; the trusteeship of William Cowper-Temple and Sir Thomas Acland is also discussed, as are the expenditures of the fund and the prospectus of that strangely utopian undertaking. Ruskin speaks, too, of the problems connected with *Fors Clavigera,* the purchase of Brantwood, and the meeting between Charles Eliot Norton and the Cowper-Temples. The letters of the seventies —and to a limited degree of the eighties as well—are, in fact, valuable for their biographical data.

Yet, it will be noticed that there are almost identical hiatuses in Ruskin's diaries (from November 1 to December 21) and in his letters to the Cowper-Temples (from October 29 to December 21), during which period Margaret Ruskin died.[1] In spite of this not wholly unexpected blow Ruskin was not idle, for in the late autumn and early winter he wrote prefaces to both *Aratra Pentelici* and *Munera Pulveris,* and he continued the monthly issues of *Fors Clavigera* as well.

[1] On December 5, 1871.

Neither had the unhappy man forgotten Rose. In his diary he notes dreaming vividly of her,[2] and echoes of her are sounded in *Fors*. With the coming of 1872 his despondency[3] is apparent, and he is still obsessed enough to record (on February 2) the anniversary of his proposal of marriage: ' And so I have waited my three years, twice over—and now."[4] Yet he continued his activities—lecturing at Oxford in February and March—and in mid-April he set out with companions upon an Italian journey from which he was to return under the most dramatic circumstances.

In the spring of 1872 Rose La Touche, who had a modest acquaintance with George MacDonald,[5] released her feelings to him in a series of letters characteristic of her neurotic condition. In April and May she wrote him of her sensitivity to pain and suffering, of her despair over the Irish poor, of her unhappiness at home, and of her mother's dislike of Harristown. Permeating these melancholy documents is a strong religious strain revealing her confused beliefs. In a letter of mid-May she writes of Ruskin:

> If it could have been so that I could have kept the friend who has brought such pain and suffering and torture and division among so many hearts—if there had never been anything but friendship between us—how much would have been spared. [6]

It seems that about this time more calumnies directed against Ruskin came to Rose's attention;[7] and in her psychasthenic state she tended to believe them. Also, it is possible that an aunt in whom Ruskin perhaps had confided, further disturbed the girl by some hostile criticism of her lover. This perhaps motivated Rose's letter of June 19, 1872, from Tunbridge Wells, sent to MacDonald to forward to Ruskin if advisable;

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[2] *Diaries*, II, 715.

[3] *Ibid.*, II, 717.

[4] *Ibid.*, II, 720.

[5] So modest that in her first letter—dated April 20, 1872—Rose thought it necessary to identify herself to MacDonald, even though he had been on close terms with the La Touches and Rose years before, and had paid visits to her home.

[6] Greville MacDonald, *Reminiscences of a Specialist*, p. 113.

[7] Leon, pp. 487 ff.

fortunately MacDonald judged the contents so bitter, so disturbing, that he refrained from sending it on. In it Rose—retrospectively judging Ruskin from some letters he wrote in 1870—accuses him of dreadful sins. The document is, in fact, suffused with her own morbid religiosity, and it is as well that the already bedeviled Ruskin did not see it.

Rose, soon after, came to stay with the MacDonalds, and George MacDonald, sensible of her deep agitation, exchanged a series of letters with Ruskin, in Venice, urging him to return to England to meet with Rose. After a show of reluctance, in which he revealed his bitterness and resentment, Ruskin, finally comprehending Rose's anxiety—heightened by the insistence of her parents that she return to Ireland from England—returned speedily from Geneva. And, between the end of July and the middle of August, he saw Rose both at the London house of the MacDonalds and at the Cowper-Temples' country seat, Broadlands, as he happily records in Letters 184 and 185. Supplementary to these letters are diary entries for the corresponding period.[8]

But—an old story now—the happiness does not endure, and the familiar cycle follows. No sooner are the lovers brought together than Rose makes him miserable.[9] Shortly after, in early September, Ruskin writes of Rose's "mental derangement," of her "fierce letter," and of the termination of their relationship. After this, in the Cowper-Temple correspondence at least, there are additional references to Rose's mental difficulties counterpointed by reminiscences of the blissful period spent at Broadlands with her. Ultimately Ruskin comes to excuse her treatment of him on the basis of her illness. Little more about Rose appears in these letters; and from 1873 whenever Rose is mentioned, it is in tones of his hopeless quest and of his resentment toward her.

By 1874 Rose's mental condition had seriously deteriorated, although she wrote Ruskin, in the autumn of that year, some of "the loveliest letters." She came to London shortly after and moved steadily toward her early death. There is reason

[8] *Diaries*, II, 729-30.

[9] *Ibid.*, II, 729.

to believe Ruskin saw her once more, for in a letter to Francesca Alexander he speaks of Rose as

> . out of her mind in the end; one evening in London she was raving violently till far into the night; they could not quiet her. At last they let me into her room. She was sitting up in bed; I got her to lie back on her pillow, and lay her head in my arms, as I knelt beside it.
>
> They left us, and she asked me if she should say a hymn. And I said yes, and she said, "Jesus, lover of my soul," to the end, and then fell back tired and went to sleep. And I left her.[10]

Soon after this Rose died, but Ruskin does not write of her passing to Mrs. Cowper-Temple; instead he turned to a great contemporary whose emotional problems were not without resemblance to his own. In a letter to Thomas Carlyle, Ruskin poignantly remarks:

> I had just got it [Academy work] done, with other worldliness, and was away into the meadows, to see buttercup and clover and bean blossom when the news came that the little story of my wild Rose was ended, and the hawthorn blossoms, this year, would fall—over her.[11]

Ruskin bore Rose's death, so far as can be ascertained, with reticence and stoicism. But the phantom of this elusive creature haunted him and dominated his writing and, indeed, his entire career, until its terrible end. Even his funeral pall was embroidered with wild roses.

After Rose's death Ruskin in his correspondence with the Cowper-Temples shows distinct signs of mental deterioration. He resorts to the language of the nursery, referring to himself as a "loving little boy" or as "poor little S[t] C." His recipients are addressed as "Grand Papa" and "Grannie"; and his emotional collapse is further indicated when he asks if he can come to dine "with some other little boys—who play at being Bishops." True, he works hard in the later seventies—lectures at Oxford, continues *Fors*, and writes and speaks on

[10] *John Ruskin's Letters to Francesca and Memoirs of the Alexanders*, ed. Lucia Gray Swett (Boston, 1931), p. 118.

[11] *Works*, XXXVII, 167-68.

the usual diversity of topics. He is, in 1881, visited by Mrs. La Touche and he enjoys new friendships—with the Alexanders, for instance—and travels with much of the old verve. But the clouds darken in the seventies too; and in 1878 comes the first fierce attack of brain fever, to be followed in the 1880's by constant mental breakdowns. The eighties are, in fact, the beginning of the end, for Ruskin's mind crumbles steadily under appalling mental onslaught. He continues doggedly, but by 1889 the strain is too great and—one year after the last letter to the Mount-Temples is written—Ruskin moves into the shades of madness where he is to remain until his death on January 20, 1900.

27th July. 71

My dear William,

Was I so very ill, really? when you saw me first? I never for one moment lost grasp of myself. Everybody thought I was acting in mad or foolish whims of sickness, but I could have written you a medical statement of the case, when I was too weak to raise myself; and was acting all along with as fixed purpose as in painting a picture.[12] I dare say Phile thought me wandering when I made her write down Hellish! abomination of—"Colman's Mustard." It was an accurate memorandum for a careful page in the next Fors but one. I have been up and about, these three days, and can do everything but walk—but I can't yet get any steadiness on my feet:—however, I've cut off the brandy & water stimulus and I think I stagger for want of being Drunk:—but I've got back now to a couple of glasses of sherry—and shall soon lessen that—this illness has taught me the preciousness of pure water—*Me*—who—of all people supposed myself to know that best!—but I did'nt *half* know it.

I've finished my August Fors—too—it is a page or two shorter than usual—but also, more important. I have desired one to be sent to you tomorrow, please read it soon: for I want you to consider of something. This number announces my first gift of £1000 to lay the foundation of the "St George's" fund,[13] for buying land in Britain. I have ordered my agent to buy 1000 Consols and lay what is to spare—the £90 or so—by to begin another round sum; but this stock must be of course bought in the name of Trustees. Now, I

[12] Ruskin's severe illness in 1871 is noted in *Works*, XXII, xviii.

[13] Ruskin refers here to the commencement of the Guild of St. George, first called St. George's Fund. For further information about the genesis of this utopian scheme see *Works*, XXVII, 141 ff.

want so much to have *you* for one, and Sir Thomas Acland[14]—(*Sir* Thomas only within this last week,) for the other.—On his Devonshire estate there is primitive ground yet—and, better still, primitive manners—and I think he will help me by maintaining what is left on his ground,—he is a very dear friend of mine—and the brother of a dearer one, Henry Acland,—and if you & he would be the Trustees—it would be so nice. I would quit you by any asseveration you dictated,—of any complicity with me in my views or absurdities—I only want you to take care of the money—for—upon my word—I scarcely know—if you will not—where to look for a man whom I can wholly trust. So please think, whether you can do it, as soon as you can.

So many thanks for all you say about R. but I'm tired writing now & will dictate to Joanna what I've to say of her. I sent her a very civil letter to which she sent an answer which for folly, insolence, and selfishness beat everything I yet have known produced by the accursed sect of religion she has been brought up in. I made Joanna re-enclose her the letter, writing only, on a scrap of paper with it—(Joanna writing that is to say, not I) "my cousin and I have read the enclosed—You shall have the rest of your letters as soon as he returns home—and your mother shall have her's"—so the letter went back, and the young lady shall never read written, nor hear spoken, word of mine more. I am entirely satisfied in being quit of her, for I feel convinced she would have been a hindrance to me, one way or other, in doing what I am more and more convinced that I shall be permitted to do *rightly*, only, on condition of putting all my strength into it.

I hope to get home on Monday, and to get my Lectures on Sculpture[15] out by the end of August—they are connected with the object of "Fors," in a most curious way, which, however, I won't undertake to explain to-day. Then, God willing

[14] Thomas Dyke Acland, educational reformer and politician, born in Devon in 1809 and educated at Harrow and Christ Church. Acland was a prominent figure in the establishing of the Oxford local examination system and was also concerned with agricultural advancements. He was for many years an M.P. from North Devon and was a patron of the young Millais. He succeeded his father as eleventh baronet in 1871 and died, in 1898, ten days after his great friend, William Ewart Gladstone.

[15] Ruskin refers here to *Aratra Pentelici*.

I shall run to Verona and Venice and come home by Pisa. What would you, and φιλη say to a walk

> "At evening on the Top of Fésole,
> Or in Val d'Arno—to descry new lands"

not in *her* spotty globe, but in our own England—through Florentine art and laws?

Lucca too *is* so lovely—*yet.*

Will you come?

Ever your affectionate
J Ruskin

Letter 173

Denmark Hill.
S. E.
1st August 1871.
7 oclock morning—just struck

My dearest Isola

I was at the window, and it ajar, at least 12 times between 4 and 5 this morning—to see a white cloud that stayed opposite the window all that time, in a long silver path in the sky.

When were *you* up—and when did you go to bed?

I should scarcely know I had been ill—only everything feels so heavy—except my heart.

I know I had a pretty dream at Matlock of some one reading Redgauntlet to me. I don't think it was anything more.

Your affectionate & grateful
Nursling.

Love to William &—thanks.

Letter 174

Morning. 2nd August [1871][16]

My dearest Isola,

I am sorely beaten down; but I can read my Chaucer again. I have not been able, for a year, to read him, nor anything that is good or dear, for myself, but only for others.

And I can write little letters before breakfast again.

Do you recollect the surrender to the Lord of the Garden, in the Romaunt?[17]

> "Ye may do with me what ye will
> Save, or spill, and also slo
> Fro you in no wise may I go."

and what he answers

> For now I wote full uttirly
> That thou art gentle by thy speech,
> For tho a man far would seche
> He "shuld not finden, in certeine
> No such answer of no villeine."

Ever your grateful St C.

[16] The tone is recuperative and suggestive of the time shortly after his illness at Matlock in July, 1871.

[17] Cf. *The Romaunt of the Rose* (Fragment B), ll. 1952 ff.

Letter 175

Denmark Hill.
S. E.

4th August 71.

My dear William

I got your two kind notes last night, and they gave me sound sleep. I think it very kind of you to let your name be used, for it will be difficult for you, so far as it may become known before next Fors not through me to make people understand it does not involve more than being holder of the Fund.

In next Fors, you yourself will see more what I mean. It is *not* to be *Communism:* quite the contrary. The old Feudal system applied to do good instead of evil—to save life, instead of destroy. That is the whole—in fewest words;—as the system gets power, I hope to see it alter *laws* all over England—(I shall go in at the lawyers very early)—so as to get powers over youth of a very stern kind indeed, and over lying & cheating tradesmen even to ——.

Well—I sent orders out of bed this morning to my cousin to buy 2000 Consols, for (I've 10,000 coming in from Yorkshire this month which gives another tithe of 1000) in the names of Sir Thos Acland of Killerton and the Rt Honr Wm Cowper-Temple. If Acland does'nt like it we'll get some one else—but I think he'll stay.

I hope the fatality of dual mischance is now ended; and that I may see you & hear of you riding for twenty years to come, without another danger. I'm going to teach my boys riding always without stirrups,—their *state* days riding with golden-bordered housings & light gold-inlaid bridles—the common riding with slightly stuffed horsecloth & steel bridle,—every three boys to have their *own* horse, when the eldest of the three is 12, having been of course tumbled on and off as soon as they could bestride one.

I entirely concur in your thoughts about other matters.

Me tabula sacer
Votiva paries, indicat—&c. &c.[18]

Ever gratefully yours

J Ruskin

Dear love to Isola.

[18] See *The Odes of Horace*, trans. W. E. Gladstone (New York, 1894), pp. 8-9, for Ode V (Book I), of which this passage is a part.

Letter 176

Denmark Hill.
S. E.
Friday. Aug 18th [1871][19]

My dear William

I have two such pretty notes from you. One—written on the sixth—(not postmarked till the 16th) about Romsey island, the other yesterday beginning my dear John.

—I did not fully know how severe the hurt of the limb had been, until I saw Small yesterday,—and had not thought how much of care and pain, even though there was no fracture, the bruise of the limb would involve:—I am very happy in your being able to come on Monday. Shall it be to five oclock tea? If the afternoon is fine, I think Isola & you would like that best. I am very grateful to you for writing to Mr Baker. I am not going to burden you in general with my work,—but I do not suppose you will think the time ill spent in giving first form & organization to the process of the scheme, such as may assure the public that it is under some rational checks and securities. Ever your grateful

JR.

If you send or bring me his answer and refer me to any solicitor whom you wish me to employ, I think I can free you from further trouble—I will make Mr Baker thoroughly understand—and the lawyer most clearly state—the conditions of gift.

My mother remains in a state in which I should not feel justified in leaving her again, except for very short intervals. I fear I must abandon thoughts of the south for this year.

[19] The date is derived from the reference to the legal problems attendant upon the St. George's Guild. See also Letters 172 and 175.

Letter 177

Coniston, 20th Sept., '71

My dearest Isola,—I don't know where you are—such a floating Island—or indeed Island of the Blessed, nobody knows where—you have become. This semblance of you is very pleasant to me, in the character of Nurse, to which I owe so much. I have a nice line from William asking me to meet Mr. Harris, but it was too late. I am at work in my *own* little garden among the hills, conscious of little more than the dust of the earth—more at peace than of old, but very low down. I like the place I have got.[20] The house is just the size I wanted; the stream, not quite, but (they say) ceaseless—all I know is, after a week's dry weather there isn't much of it left, now. I have some real rocks and heather, some firs and a copse, and a lovely field, with nothing visible over the edge of its green waves but the lake and sunset—when the sun is there to set, which, thanks to Lancaster smoke, he no more always is than at London.

"Brantwood, Coniston Lake, Ambleside" will find me (within a day or two) for three weeks to come (and always hereafter somehow).—Ever your loving

J. R.

[20] Ruskin had very recently purchased Brantwood and had, in fact, made his first visit there only on September 12, 1871.

Letter 178

Denmark Hill
Sunday
29th Oct.
/71.

My dearest Isola,

It is true that I am tired to-day, and Joanie is so very dear that I can let her write for me even to *you*. Still, to-day, I must only quickly tell you what to see—first at Milan the chief thing is the Monasterio Maggiore—the whole church is covered with Luini's frescos—my St. Catherine in the back church behind the screen.

Glean out at the Brera and elsewhere what of Luini you can find—and see the Monastery of Chiaravalle this last essential. At Verona—Murray tells you everything—except to drive at sunset seven miles out through Bussolengo towards the Lago di Garda—this is essential.

Give yourselves time to climb the little hills so as to see Verona behind, and the Lago di Garda in front. At Padua the frescos of Mantegna—both sides of the Great Hall—and its surroundings—of course the Arena Chapel—the Southern Chapels of St Antonio—and above all as examples of perfect sculpture its two small holy water vessels, in marble—the sculptures of the St. Antony Chapel are affected—but those among them by the Lombardi are fine—you need not trouble to see Titian's frescos, but notice the so-called tomb of Antenor—simplest early Gothic—and all the tombs in the church where Mantegna's frescos are—close to the Arena Chapel—enquire by the way—at Verona for the Parroco[21] of St. Anastasia—& see if he is able still to keep the Chiaravalle chapel clear—and give my kind regards to my Landlord at the Due Torri—and, if you can, get my coachman for the drive through Bussolengo—My compliments also to the excellent custode of St Zeno.

[21] Parish priest.

You may look at the Lantern Chapel of San Michele—as one of the most interesting examples of the frantic and fruitless grotesque—of the Renaissance—mad with its skill and ambition—and wholly devoid of piety and thought—on the other hand—the finest thing in all Verona—is the tomb of Can Grande—his Prime Minister over the little gateway at St. Anastasia—then Can Mastino second—at culminating skill with less nobility—and Can Signorio far far fallen—notice the Physicians tomb in the church of St Anastasia—left hand going in on the inside of the front wall—it is very lovely—and give plenty time to the lateral porch and the pulpit of San Iserino. *My* Gryphons you will find in front of the Duomo, if they have been fools enough to stay, under Republican Government!—the Apse of the Duomo outside is quite consummate in proportion, & reserved use of decoration among Romanesque buildings—There is a little church among the Vineyards on the other side of the river with a precious early Sarcophagus in its crypt—and altogether full of tender sentiment—but I forget its name—and I am sure I have told you as you can happily see—whatever time you have—I know nothing of Pavia—but there are mighty things there. The Certosa is all rubbish—I am fairly well—and doing good work.

Love to William

Ever your loving J Ruskin.

Much love from Joan—& best thanks for the sweet letter to her—She will write again when she knows where to address.

Letter 179

Denmark Hill

21st Decr. [1871][22]

Dear Mr Cowper-Temple

This is not Joan, but *me* that's writing! and I'm afraid it would be much better if it was'nt me.

But, I hope by this time that the milder weather has enabled you to conquer your cold.

And, I shall not tease you very much, and φιλη can write to me in a moment what I want to know.

There's some mistake at the Bank about the St. George's Fund.

I went yesterday to transfer another £5000 into the names of the Trustees, and they would'nt admit that they had any account in Consols either in your name, or Acland's. Will you please tell me if the money has been placed elsewhere, or send me word how to transfer the additional sum?

It is £5000 Consols clear—and I want to get it transferred quickly—because I have said in my Xmas "Fors" that it *is* transferred.

Can you telegraph on receiving this what they are to ask for? to Messrs Pawle & Co 31 Throgmorton St. I have'nt a minute more to-day, but am very glad you are both home.

Love to Isola.

Ever your affe. J. Ruskin.

[22] The textual references to the St. George's Guild suggest the year ascribed.

Letter 180

Denmark Hill, S. E.
22nd Dec. [1871][23]

Dear Mr Cowper

As far as I can judge you may with perfect freedom of purpose and great power of doing good, now join our sanguine society—but of course there are a thousand things you have to consider, which I know nothing about.

The prospectus *will* be out, now—in two or three days, and you can think it over then—but of course we should all be grateful to you if you would join us at once. It simply means that everybody is to do all he can—and that everybody knows his neighbours work—and helps it as far as possible.

I am just going out, and can only say this—& how sorry I am for what causes you sorrow.

Ever faithfully Yours
J Ruskin

[23] The allusion to the Guild of St. George serves to establish the year. The Guild begins to take shape in 1871 and Ruskin did not reside at Denmark Hill in December after that year.

Letter 181

Denmark Hill.
S. E.

8th January 72

My dear William

Best thanks. There is no haste however, about dividends. I have already some minor subscriptions in hand, and shall publish, in Fors, monthly, the state of the accounts. When you come to town and have seen Acland it will of course be well to open an account at the Bank: but as yet, I should be ashamed to have one, as nobody joins me,—I shall go on patiently, till somebody does. I am very thankful for the bright weather, which extends even here,—and for Isola's letters. I am preparing, for the Oxford schools, my first bit of natural history—to wit "The Mythic and True History of common English Birds." Arranged for the use of the lower School of Drawing at Oxford, by—&c &c.[24]

I

The Halcyon.[25]

—Have you got any King Fishers about that river of your's.

Ever your very grateful & affec^e^.

JR

[24] A reference to a series of lectures given at Oxford during Lent Term, 1872. They were entitled *The Eagle's Nest* (*Works*, XXII, 111-288).

[25] The halcyon gives its name to the title of Lecture IX in *The Eagle's Nest*. Actually, this lecture had already been given at Woolwich by Ruskin on January 13, 1872, five days after the above letter was written. At that time the lecture was entitled "The Bird of Calm."

Corpus Christi College
Oxford

First Sunday in Lent. 1872

My dearest Isola,

I received the Sacrament this morning, from the head of my college—for the first time these—I think—seven years, and heard the Epistle read, with more understanding than ever before.

It is all very fine, when—some day—one hopes for anything better. But what of this poor Pelican?

I write you my first note on paper with my College crest[26] and am ever

Your loving and faithful

J Ruskin

[26] Which appears, centered, at the top of the page.

Letter 183

Love to William

Venice 12th July
72

My dearest φιλη

I have your little note—I fear you never got one of mine asking you to write to Florence—It was not worth getting, and I have not been able to write or think, or feel, most of my days,—except needful matters for my routine work.

I am coming home, now, in haste[27]—but not for my own sake—nor perhaps, much for any one else's. Whatever good can come now, is too late, except peace—which I hope to get or give, at last.

Ever your loving
J Ruskin

[27] To meet with Rose La Touche, in response to George MacDonald's urgent requests.

[Late July, 1872][28]

My dear William

I have half killed the poor girl and her mother[29] I had charge of, in coming home at speed from Geneva—and now you don't want me till Sunday afternoon—and I have not had one rational word from any of you all this fortnight. First φιλη writes to say she must'nt write—Then that the poor child is in such a state of mind—and she'll tell me all when I come —and then—that she'll be glad to see me on Sunday.

—Well—I'll come, if I can.

Yours always, affectionately

JR.

[28] Ruskin arrived in England on July 26, 1872 (*Diaries*, II, 728) and saw Rose shortly after, as Letter 188 indicates. This letter, then, was written very near the end of the month.

[29] Mrs. Hilliard and her daughter Constance, who had been of Ruskin's party in Venice.

Letter 185

Denmark Hill.
S. E.

Before breakfast
3rd August. 72

Dearest Isola,

Now, would'nt it be lovely if you had sent me a little note telling me to come to church tomorrow at Romsey, and that I might have a walk afterwards, beside the Liffey. No, it is'nt the Liffey—you know—what is it?

Of course, it's as impossible as the Kingdom of Heaven. (Heaven be praised for it's *not* a Queendom—there, at least, and there will be peace for poor tortured wretches.)—but I shall get a note presently, exhorting me to Patience and all the Virtues. Or perhaps no note at all. Or a note to say you meant to write, but it's post-time—or dinner time—or bed time. Patience! But what *is* to be done with me? What is she going to do? Is she going to wear that white hat again, and is everybody to see it except me. *Please* don't let her wear that white hat. Perhaps—if she were'nt allowed to wear white hats—she might feel something was wrong,—when she makes other people wear black, all over. Do you recollect the order of Mercy in Florence, with the black marks. *They* even—have their eyes left open. She puts me in black iron, and closes the helmet over the eyes.

Please—please—please—don't let her wear that white hat, —nor white shawl. Make her wear a black veil,—as they do at Verona—only quite over her face. Who should see her, if I may not?

I've been working so hard on Pietro Perugino, in Italy this time—and I've found out how he did all those lovely things— You would never have had Tobit and the angel over your chimneypiece,—if he had been treated as I am. "Pietro took a very beautiful girl to wife; and he is said to have had so much pleasure in seeing her wear becoming headdresses, both

abroad and at home, that he was occasionally known to arrange this part of her toilet with his own hands."[30] I suppose that was because she was like some Irish girls—and "loved *with her head, and not with her heart.*" She wished she could let me see the heart—which she can't—and won't let me see the face—which I can—which only I can. No other ever saw her rightly—I am sure of that.

After breakfast. There *is* no letter—and its very dreadful—and I don't know what to do.

Am I alive again—or are you only a beautiful Witch of Endor,—and I only raised for a moment to say—"Why hast thou disquieted me"?

—I'll do all she bids me that is possible—but she can't bid me be happy.

Ever your poor S^{t} C.

[30] See Vasari's *Lives.*

Tuesday Evening.
[August 13, 1872][31]

Dearest Isola,

I do not believe that ever any creature out of heaven has been so much loved as I love that child. I am quite tired tonight—not with pain—but mere love—she was so good and so grave, and so gay, and so terribly lovely—and so merciless, and so kind—and so "ineffable."

You looked sadly grave and worn all day—Was anything more wrong for me than before? I have got anxious, thinking over the thing. You never *said a word of my letter*? Did you ever see anything half so lovely? as she was at last. How shall I ever thank you enough—I will try to be so good—but I am very weary—six years and a half—and scarcely any hope now. But the great good to me is finding how noble she is—she is worth all the worship—How thankful I should be for the change since this time last year.—William was so kind to me —Love to him.

Ever Yours,
St. C.

[31] This and the next letter plainly refer to Tuesday, August 13, 1872, which fateful day Ruskin spent at Broadlands with Rose. For corroboration of their day together, see *Diaries*, II, 729.

Morning. 15th August
1872

Dearest Isola

I have no words to day—I should come and lie at your feet all day long, if I could, trying to thank you with my eyes.[32]

Nothing can come now that I cannot bear—No death, nor life shall separate me from the love of God any more. However long she is kept from me,—whatever she does to me,—I will not fear, nor grieve—but wait—and be more like her when she is given at last—and more worthy of her. Oh how foolish we all were,—thinking it was *she* who was unworthy—were not we? So much love to William too. As much as ever he will have, I will give him. You will tell me how much he would like? And you must have ever so much whether you like it or not.

Ever your happy & loving St C.

[32] In gratitude for the day of August 13, 1872, which Ruskin spent at Broadlands with Rose (*Diaries*, II, 729).

Letter 188

Saturday 18th. Aug. 72.[33]
Morning

Oh me, dearest Isola—we are poor weak things. I thought my one day at Broadlands[34] might have lasted me for a century,—and now—I am quite sick with pining for—one home—one minute more—Why did you let her go away—I was too timid & feeble,—but I did not know what hold I had. If only I had seen—what I saw yesterday: her letter to Mr Macdonald after she had first seen me—(28th July)—she never should have gone home—except to mine—now I'm all restless and wretched again. And though I know and am wholly sure, that unless some fearful tragic thing happens—she *must* come to me—still—this pleasant year is flying fast—another month of pain—and all the sweet summer days will be ended. *Can't* you get her back again for me. I was so foolish and wrong to let her go,[35]—and yet I did it more in faith, and in reverence, than in foolishness—and I ought not to have more grief for it. Ah, get her back for me, and give me yet some days with bright morning and calm sunset—in *this* year—I am very old, to wait,—think!

Ten oclock—your letter—and William's—and Two from Her,—and I shall see her—God helping me—and keep her:—at least save her from all fear.

I was praying so hard all the morning—from light till I rose—that she might not be taken from me just now—and that I might not have more change or horror of doubt. And so it is.—All you say is true. This little lovely thing—does'nt

[33] Ruskin errs in dating this letter: Saturday fell on the seventeenth.

[34] See Letter 187, n. 32.

[35] Rose went from Broadlands to visit the Leycesters, relatives of Mrs. Cowper-Temple, where Ruskin, upon her request, went to join her (Leon, p. 496).

she see that I *do* love God best—in the form I see Him. I did not leave the work He had set me—because she was taken from me; I would not leave it now, for her, if she were indeed set before me for temptation—I would leave life for her; if I might, but neither lie for her, nor fail in any duty I had upon me, for her. She *is* second, if she would only forgive me for loving secondly too well!

—I am so thankful too to be relieved from the feeling of having delivered her up to her tormentors by my folly and hesitation—I see I could not have rightly done more, then: but now! —I don't mean that I will press her about marriage—but she shall not go back *there,*—Come and Help *us.* Ever your lovingest & William's S^{t} C.

Letter 189

Herne Hill. S. E.
Monday [August 19, 1872][36]

My dear William

Your letter is wise and kind; yet how can I entirely trust your judgment? It must have been mainly formed since Wednesday? You had as much hope as I, then? had you not. You did not then think her a basilisk.

Among the mocks of fortune at me in this, one of the strangest is that the Carpaccio chapel,[37] from which I dated my letter saying I would come home and do what R wished, if she would ask me, face to face, contains, and was haunted by me because containing the fight of S^{t} George with the dragon, and of S^{t} (Urban?) with the Basilisk.

The dragon is bridled, (not utterly killed)—and the Basilisk, made innocent, and tame.

The Basilisk is *such* a comic Basilisk! Yet in its way of walking and holding its head—there *is* really what might make one think of our Basilisk.

Well, from that chapel, I wrote solemnly, saying I would do what I could to help her. And in your house, I vowed loyalty to her, to the death, and she let me kiss her. I cannot break my oath. I do not think she can even give it back to me. Basilisk or not, I must service her, obey her—live and die for her, now. Suppose she should not be a serpent—but a flower—Or a stone? Women have been changed into flowers. Why not flowers into women? They have been changed into

[36] The date is derived from the connection between this letter, through its fifth paragraph, and Letter 188. Also, August 19 of the year ascribed fell on a Monday.

[37] While always interested in Carpaccio, Ruskin's enthusiasm increased after 1870, and in the summer of 1872 he studied that artist in Venice. For some observations of Ruskin's directly connected with this letter, see *Works*, XXIV, 339 ff.

stones—and Heaven knows—have changed men into them. But—was it for nothing we went to see Pygmalion?[38] And you know—Edward said he was going to better the statue? I can do nothing. I have been miserable in liberty. It is better to be miserable in bondage. Such servitude is at least in itself a noble state, the liberty always an accursed one.

Think for me, therefore, as thus bound, & believe me

Ever your grateful

S^t^ C.

[38] Ruskin is most probably referring to a series of four oil paintings by Edward Burne-Jones which have the general title "Pygmalion and the Image." These were started in 1868 and completed in 1878. They are distinct from the twelve illustrations to "The Story of Pygmalion and the Image" executed by the same artist in 1867.

Brantwood
Coniston

Before breakfast.
13th Septr. 1872

My dearest Isola,

I don't know where you are—and as you are Isola more than ever now, that is hard.

If ever you write to that child, send her this, from me.

ἀφῆκας τὰ βαρύτερα τοῦ νόμου,
τὴν κρίσιν, καὶ τὸν ἔλεον, καὶ
τὴν πίστιν.[39]

The verse comes to me as the end of my first morning's reading in my own house on my own land;—and I don't feel as if it were meant for *me.* At all events, I never understood it so clearly as I seem to do—thinking—not of myself.

What are you doing in that wretched Ireland.

We have had nothing but rain here. The lake—six miles long by half mile broad has risen 3 feet vertical—you may fancy what that means of rain. My house is on a rock, very literally, else my hope had been as the hypocrites indeed.—But I think it will be dry by the time you & William come back from Ireland, if you like to come & see it.

Ever your loving St C.

[39] "[Ye] have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith."—Matt. 23:23. See also *Diaries,* II, 732, where Ruskin uses this biblical excerpt.

I say I *will* send you the letter—I don't to day, not to give you too much pain.

Brantwood.

Coniston.
28th Sept. 72

My dearest φιλη

I am glad of your letter. I wrote a line some fortnight since to Prince's place, which you have not got.

I knew perfectly well that there was mental derangement at the root of all. Which does not make the thing less sad; but it prevents it from being cruel or monstrous. Except as all insanity and worry are connected—and a kind of Possession.

I will send you a letter I wrote, but did not send, partly by Joanna's wish,—frankly and solemnly telling her this. Instead of sending it, I tried to soothe her by affectionate play, which, she being at the time neither affectionate nor playful, put her in a fury, and she closed all intercourse.

Nothing but prolonged pain or death can, so far as I can judge—follow—for one or both of us,—for my own strength of *body* is almost entirely gone in the ghastly loss, I do not say of hope for I have *not* lost it altogether—but of courage and faith—which no effort—I was going to say, will recover, but the fact is I can't make the effort. I received her last fierce letter, re-enclosing mine unopened, at the door of the church as I was going in.—I suppose I ought to have gone in—but even Joan could not—or thought she could not.[40] So we came home and since, I have been playing chess—digging—and writing history—as I can.—My last entry in diary is—"Fallen & wicked & lost in all thought—must recover by work."[41]

I have got pretty Lily Armstrong and Lolly Hilliard here—however—and the house rings with laughter all day long. Yet

[40] This distressing situation is noted in *Diaries*, II, 732, under entry of September 8, 1872.

[41] See, for this entry, *Diaries*, II, 732.

only Lolly is really gay,—poor Lily has not forgotten her wicked English lover—any more than I've forgotten my mad Irish one—but she is bright by nature, and pretty to look at—and wonderfully dear & thoughtful to Joanna.[42]

I wish you would or could tell me what *sort* of "anguish" the mother is in. Is she furious as well as anguished, still? What sort of terms does she keep with you? I can't fancy.

I am thankful for any dim report either of death or life.

I did what I thought best for *her* alone only; I never once in all those hours and chances, pleaded for myself, except merely as a *present lover.* I never put forward any past claim, never told her how she had injured or would, injure, me by quitting me. I wish I had now, but all my life I have seen too late what should have been. So it will be to the end.

Ever your lovingest S^{t} C.

[42] Who had come, with her husband and first child, to stay at Brantwood.

Brantwood.
Coniston.
2nd Oct. 72

My dearest Isola,

You have not been a Siren's Island. *All* that you have done has *always* been good for me, and successful in every point. It was entirely right and good for me that all this should happen, rather than that the former state of things should have remained. What you say of the horror that might have been, is also true and wise. But the horror that is, becomes more marvellous to me, day by day.† (see last page).

One thing you have now in your power, to help and soothe me,—do not allow yourself any more to be broken by overwork as you have lately been—not least by me,—by *us*, (—for—mad, or dead, she is still mine).

—Write to her as you used to do—whatever can soothe her (I meant—don't let her think that *I'm* satisfied with her, but you won't speak of me.)

I shall never more come to Broadlands,—but you and William may have really happy times here, when you want Cottage life—absolute peace—and any kind of *Watery* refreshment.

Love to William. He has good right to be provoked at the trouble I've given you—I hope to torment you no more, but to be in some poor measure—pleasant to you & always your loving St C.

Do you notice how intensely *selfish* all *insanity* is? Very curious? "Troubled"—between fear of hearing of me, and fear lest *she* should be misjudged. Is a baser or more wicked state of mind—supposing it *sane*, conceivable?

† You say everything is bearable but *Remorse*.

Now I *have* that also, to bear—*I* failed in faith & perseverance, long before *she* gave way.

I shall always feel, that had I deserved her, I should have got her. But then! my own weakness,—my own incapability of feeling what real saints have felt—joined with what I cannot doubt in myself of kindness & usefulness—is only a greater darkness to me than if I had deserved her & not got her.

Why did not our God make me but a little stronger—*her* but a little wiser—both of us happy—? Now—granting me faultful, her foolish, I suffer for her madness—she for my sin—and both unjustly. Why should she go mad, because *I* don't pray faithfully.

Letter 193

Before Breakfast
Brantwood.
Coniston.
4th Oct [1872][43]

My dearest Isola

The good that you may be sure you have done me remember, is in my having known, actually, for one whole day, the *perfect* joy of love. For I think, to be *quite* perfect, it must still have *some* doubt and pain—the pride of war and patience added to the intense actual pleasure. I don't think any *quite* accepted & beloved lover could have the Kingly and Servantly joy together, as I had it in that ferry boat of yours, when she went into it herself, and stood at the stern, and let me stop it in mid-stream and look her full in the face for a long minute, before she said "Now go on"—The beautiful place—the entire peace—nothing but birds & squirrels near—the trust, which I had then in all things being—finally well—yet the noble fear mixed with the enchantment—her remaining still above me, not mine, and yet mine.

And this after ten years of various pain—and thirst. And this with such a creature to love—For you know, Isola, people may think her pretty or not pretty—as their taste may be, but she is a *rare* creature, and that kind of beauty happening to be *exactly* the kind I like,—and my whole life being a worship of beauty,—fancy how it intensifies the whole.

Of course, every lover, good for anything, thinks his mistress perfection—but what a difference between this instinctive, foolish—groundless preference, and my deliberate admiration of R, as I admire a thin figure in a Perugino fresco, saying "it is the lovliest figure I know after my thirty years study of art"—Well—suppose the Perugino—better than Pygmalions

[43] The close relationship between this letter and Letter 192—even to repetition of phrase—is highly suggestive of the year ascribed, as are the references to the day Ruskin spent with Rose at Broadlands in August, 1872.

statue,—holier—longer sought, *had* left the canvas—come into the garden—walked down to the riverside with me—looked happy—been happy, (—for she *was*—and said she was)—in being with me.

Was'nt it a day, to have got for me?—all your getting.

And clear gain—I am no worse now than I was,—a day or two more of torment and disappointment are as nothing in the continued darkness of my life. But that day is worth being born and living seventy years of pain for.

And I can still read my Chaucer, and write before-breakfast letters—Mad, or dead, she is still mine, now. Ever your loving

S^{t} C.

Brantwood.
Coniston.
[Late October, 1872][44]

Dearest φιλη

So many thanks for writing, when all that grief[45] was with you. Yes—one day—forty years—a thousand years—One might feel enough to make all the same.

I know she could not treat me so but in illness, so that please tell me everything.

I don't know, of the knowledge what it is worst to know but I know silence is worst of all.

—I am going on with my work. You know I did it for a year,—before, hopeless,—and I've learned a great deal in this.

For *one* thing—I always fancied before that I was ill,—not knowing the effect on me of the want of joy,—*now*, I know what is the matter, and can reason about it.

—I shall be at Oxford on Tuesday, D. V.

—Write when you can, there—but I am in hopes now that you will get to find it some *relief* to write to me—as you can't but do me good—and can't do me harm, except by silence.

Ever your loving S[t] C.

[44] This conjectural date derives from *Diaries*, II, 733, where it is apparent that Ruskin was at Oxford—to which place he refers in the letter—on Wednesday, October 30, 1872.

[45] Doubtless a reference to the death, on October 13, 1872, of Emily, Lady Shaftesbury, one of William Cowper-Temple's sisters.

So many thanks for being
kind to Lily.

Brantwood.
Coniston.
[January-March, 1873][46]

My dearest Isola

I've just written a note to you, and forgot to say the main thing I wanted—namely, that you would let Miss Norton—Charles Norton's eldest sister, call on you; & then go and see them—His Mother cannot now go out much—so his sister must come,—he is not well neither—but I particularly want William & you and Charles & all of his family to know as much of each other as is possible—in this poor month. And you'll be going away at Easter—I've just got a letter about poor Joanie needs answer—must stop.

[46] The date is based on Norton's presence in London at this time; he was quite ill during this winter residence in England.

Letter 196

Brantwood, 17th Febry., '73. Morning.[47]

. . . I am getting this place into some form, and I think it will soon be pretty enough to ask you to come and grace it with more sweetness than even its best spring flowers can. Fancy how I was taken in, the day before yesterday. I came down from London without stopping, and was therefore crossing Lancaster Sands at five o'clock. It had been steadily cloudy, and I was reading and not looking out, when, the train stopping at a little station, I saw, looking up, an opening in the west, and a range, as I thought, of thunder-clouds in red light. I was greatly amazed, and said to myself, "Well, I thought I knew something of skies, but those are the grandest clouds I ever saw yet." In five minutes more, as the train went on, I saw they were my own mountains in their snow. And I would rather have had a Turner drawing of that view over Lancaster Sands than even my "Arona" on the Lago Maggiore. I've got a cat, but she scratches, and I can't keep her tail out of the candles in the evening; and I've got a dog—a shepherd's—who won't do anything wrong—but it's so horribly moral, it's more dull than I am myself. Love to William.—Ever your loving

St. C.

[47] This letter appears, in fragmentary form unfortunately, in *Works*, XXVII, 62.

Letter 197

Brantwood.
Coniston.
Sunday 2nd March
1873

Dearest φιλη,

Thanks always for *any* word.

Yes those marbles are precious to me, beyond speaking. I have a great sealed well of feeling—under the ice still—thank heaven, and you,—for nature—and her true children, and for my work.

In much haste today.

Your ever grateful

JR

I often try to fancy myself at Matlock. Not—at Broadlands.

Letter 198

Brantwood,
Coniston. Lancashire.
[April, 1873][48]

My dear William

Will you please tell me if the present Lord Derby has done anything in the book way? It was his father who did the Homer—was'nt it?—Has this one written anything?—I want to speak of him incidentally in next Fors, as an "unscholarly blockhead," but I must keep out the unscholarly if he has written anything—(though it is true enough anyhow.)

I shall soon have this place now, in a state fit for you & Isola to come and see. I find it was measured by the northern "acre" instead of the south English one—and that therefore, instead of 25 I have some 28 or 30 acres—and in that, there are little bits of in and out and up and down—quite pretty—and the *wild* primroses stick themselves so cunningly into the right corner—as if they had been planted by the charmingest French milliners.

I should have written about this to Isola, instead of you—you satirical person—only Isola would have expected me to say Angels instead of French milliners—and I don't feel inclined.

Always your affect[e]
JR.

[48] The conjectural date derives from the textual reference to Lord Derby. Ruskin does mention him in the "next Fors" (of May, 1873), but not as an "unscholarly blockhead" (see *Works*, XXVII, 536).

Corpus Christi College
Oxford
[Early to mid-May, 1873][49]

My dear William

I think that will be an excellent plan about the interest and subscriptions, keeping the former only for appliance.

I enclose you two letters from the man I mean to set on the cottage ground—if we get it. I have every confidence in him. I can't get to Stanhope St till near six tomorrow. I come up by the 2/15 train but must go to Vauxhall to see the Doulton Potteries first.

I bring Crawley, not Klein, this time, as he knows my lecture business.

—Of course I shall keep tickets for Isola & you. But I thought Joan had seen to that.

Ever your affᵉ.
JR.

[49] The textual reference to lecturing suggests the date ascribed. On May 10 and 17, 1873, Ruskin spoke at Eton while still maintaining a heavy load of work at Oxford (see *Diaries*, II, 746).

Letter 200

Brantwood,
Coniston. Lancashire.
5th Aug.
1873

My dearest Isola,

I am very thankful for the note, to day. Please come, and stay as long as you can bear it, or have time.[50] I have been going to write about it, this many a day,—but never liked to teaze you,—and I think the thought of me must, more or less, now: and I was not sure of my own staying here all the autumn, but now I do so, so that William and you can just choose your own time, and perhaps to save me a day or two out of your busy life. Joan and Arthur will be here. I think more highly of Arthur as I know him more intimately, and I should like you also to see him in this more true state of mind and occupation.

I am working very hard—and scarcely know why—or how —not hoping to be of use to anybody, yet not able to keep quiet.

Joan is in an ecstasy of delight at the thought of your coming—and I like it, and there's enough in the neighbourhood to interest you, in its moorish, grey-craggy way. The house is about the size of a yacht-cabin—and it will be like a gipseying party to you, in a caravan.

You shall see the pretty Italian book too—Such witches and necromancies in it—But you and William are all in the R school of divinity again—it seems to me. Work witches in that, or rather than in mine.

I don't know which is worst—and am in a miserable dead eddy between R and Voltaire.—I got *such* a copy of the Dictionnaire Philosophique the other day! If only I could learn some Philosophy out of it!

Ever your loving
St C.

[50] The Mount-Temples arrived at Brantwood on August 19 (*Diaries*, II, 755).

Letter 201

Brantwood,
Coniston. Lancashire.
4th Sept. 73

My dear William

I was very grateful for your letter, and am especially thankful that you care enough for me to write such an one—enough to see that I am not well and to try to help me: or make me help myself. But it is too late for any wisdom of my friends or my own to be of any use.—I find my health now steadily declining into the state of age—and should feel myself wholly unjustified in asking any young girl to throw herself away upon me. The sense of its being thus, checked me even in my pleading with R.—I perhaps only mortified and offended her by never pressing the thing except with the implied persuasion that it was best for *her*. And that would only have been so under the condition of her having loved me too long to change. It would be mere selfishness in me to try to win any new love now.

Besides, I cannot take the risk. I *can* bear melancholy—but not more anxiety or distress. I am quite fool enough to fall in love still to a point which would make failure a new calamity to me—and I believe that my destiny is never to fall in love when I should have a chance of success.

Quiet end of life in faithfulness to R would be best for myself and others. She has been so cruel to me that I cannot be rightly faithful to her; *this* is the real root of all that is worst in my present days.—I cannot rest, even with my cold glass idol—it is flawed. But I think the best way of looking at the whole business is—to remember that the happier life might have led me away from what I had to do, and given me false views of fate and of the spiritual world. At all events, in this darkness I can think at leisure, and am not liable to mistake myself for a particular favourite of Heaven—which

I was beginning to think myself—when I was last at Broadlands.

But I must really come and see those nice Irish people of yours.—I think I really *might* perhaps carry a very *poor,* barefooted, grey eyed Irish girl home to Brantwood.—I'm afraid even she would want to get back to her own moors—and to Isola's smile.

Ever your affectionate J Ruskin

Letter 202

Brantwood.
Coniston. Lancashire.
[September, 1873][51]

Darling φιλη

Thanks, so much, for both lines received today—I'm very sorry for your cold—but I'm living the life of Tantalus and Prometheus in one, and can scarcely feel for anyone but myself. Still—Tantalus & Prometheus are better than Romeo's banishment,—and I am doing good work through the torment. But if unfledged angels always behave so, I think no more ought to be hatched.—Love to William. Ever your loving

JR.

[51] The similarity in tone between this letter and Letter 201 suggests the possibility of the date ascribed.

Brantwood.
Coniston. Lancashire.
[September, 1873][52]

My dearest φιλη

Do you know, its really very *bad* of you not writing me a word about *any*thing just now. What are you and William about.

What a really grim book that Queen of the Air is!—especially its account of the life of Tantalus.[53]

Ever your loving S[t] G.

[52] The allusion to Tantalus here and in Letter 202 suggests a closeness in time of writing.

[53] *Works*, XIX, 315-16.

[?1874][54]

You are compromising somehow between God and Satan, and therefore don't see your way. Satan appears to you as an angel of the most exquisite light—I can see that well enough; but how many real angels he has got himself mixed up with, I don't know. However, for the three and fortieth time—in Ireland or England or France, or under the *Ara Coeli* perhaps best of all, take an acre of ground, make it lovely, give what food comes of it to people who need it—and take no rent of it yourselves. "But that strikes at the very foundations of Society?" It does; and therefore, do it. For the Foundations of Society are rotten with every imaginable plague, and must be struck at and swept away, and others built in Christ, instead of on the back of the Leviathan of the Northern Foam. —Ever your affectionate St. C.—not the Professor.

[54] In *Works*, XXXVII, 110, Cook and Wedderburn so date this fragment.

Assisi,[55] 10th June. 74

Dearest φιλη

That sentence is written—then, *also* on the gate of Heaven, you think?

Yes—in a sort, and so I accept it from you.

And yet with this difference—that *my* heaven—on such terms—can only be that of the verde *smalto*[56] floor.

I cannot answer your letter today—not because of its enclosure—but because there is much to be very seriously answered, respecting your feast of Tabernacles proceedings &c.

In the mean-time—I think a little very surly [?] and guilty bit of me will be good for you, not a bit of good Italy at all.

You know, I think, that I gave some money to two of the monks here. I still think them good and religious men:—but I have the sorrowfullest reason to think they are not acting honestly.—And I find this *money* text—it is *Christs main* one, always,—the Real one (and final—in 1000 cases to one). Miss R's letter is full of—what you very properly call 'moonshine.' She and her family spent ten napoleons a day for rooms only, when they travelled—and the three women had three lady's maids. And she can't give tenpence for my Fors!!!

Now my dearest φιλη,—believe me—I know more of the matter than either she or you on its *evil* side: and there are considerably more devils than angels at work on you both—at present—possibly for your—future good.

But assuredly—you are both being *deceived*—which is peculiarly diabolic business.—You—in not having believed in Utopia at all till you saw it, (which is not belief at all—but

[55] In the MS, above Assisi and in Ruskin's hand, is the following: "(Letter signed at *Top:* John Ruskin, signature being unusually necessary!)"

[56] See Dante's *Inferno* iv. 118.

by grace & courtesy to S^{t} Thomas—) and She, Alas, was then ever yet so "deceiving and being deceived" a daughter of Israel.

Write here when you *like*—not in mere indulgence to me; You are only helpful to me by *liking* to write—Rose herself could do me no good, unless she *liked!* But she shall assuredly give tenpence for Fors, as far as I am concerned—and I most solemnly beg you to send her nothing to please—or flatter her vanity—or assist her [*illegible*]—except with [*illegible*] come.

Letter 206

The Sacristan's Cell, Monastery of Assisi,
14th June, '74. Before breakfast.

My dearest Isola,—I get leave to write here, always now, for the perfect quiet—two little windows looking out into the deep valley which runs up into the Apennines give me light enough, and there's the lower church, with Giotto's fresco of Poverty in it, between me and any "mortal" disturbance. St. Francis in his grave a few yards away from me does not, I find, give me any interruption. I have been thinking as I walked down the hillside to the church, why you could'nt believe in Utopia; and whether you really, since you don't *see Him* either, believe in Christ. Are you quite sure, William and you, that you do as *if* you saw Him? I can guess (I think) what He would say to you if you did. Do you ever try to fancy it, seriously? Suppose He were coming to dine with you to-day, now, Isola, and you've got to order the dinner, what will you have? Now, just get a bit of paper and write down your orders to the cook, on that supposition. Mind you do as I bid you, now, or I'll never write to you any more. And then, think where He's to sit, and where William is to sit, and how you'll arrange the other people, and what you'll talk about, if *He* doesn't care to talk. Mind, you mustn't *change your party;* I suppose Him to have just sent Gabriel to tell you He's coming, but *particularly* that you're not to make any alterations in your company on His account.—Ever your affectionate

St. C.

Corpus Christi College
Oxford

3rd Dec. 74

My dear William

Can you spare time to send me a short note of the present state of St George's fund for publication in the Christmas Fors?

Dear love to Isola. I give my last (of 12) lectures[57] tomorrow—I wish she had been at one—nobody ever comes that I care to see.—That's not quite true neither. Joanie & Connie came—last week and said it was nice.

Ever affectionately Yours,
J Ruskin

[57] Some of the lectures referred to here appear in *Works*, XXIII, 179 ff. entitled *The Aesthetic and Mathematic Schools of Art in Florence*. They were delivered in Michaelmas Term at Oxford.

Order of Monte Rosa. Christmas. 1871.
Isola
Joan
Dora.[58]

1st January. 1875

My dearest Isola

I've just cut this leaf out of the book—very prettily bound —in which I intended the Monte Rosa's to be inscribed— These—you see—are all I've got—in the four—no—three years since—or four altogether from beginning, and I believe of these three—the third's the only one to be counted on.

Do your fine spirits and good people ever say aloud about the matter?

—I have not stirred out of the house since I came into it except once to the door to gather a saxifrage leaf. What are you and William about?

Ever your affe. St C.

C must stand now for 'Cereel.'—Well if it is'nt [*illegible*]

[58] Down to here the writing is not in Ruskin's hand.

Letter 209

Brantwood, 16th January, '75.

My dearest Isola,—I am so very glad of your note; but more than usually ashamed of the quantity of trouble I have given both you and William—all turning to no good—and I'll try not to be troublesome by recollections of door steps or garden walks, or the like, in future; and I would come down just now at once, but for mere and absolute need for me to be in my own house all the time I can be, especially as the servants are out of temper with the place and the walls weary of rain. It is curious that I have been reading the 24th Ezekiel this morning. Did you ever hear anybody pitying him? Yet, I fancy, he was much more really to be pitied than Job unless—do you recollect Coleridge's epigram on Job ending "Shortsighted Satan *not* to take his spouse"?[59] The worst of me is that the Desire of my *Eyes* is so much to me! Ever so much more than the desire of my mind. (You see, that is what William doesn't allow for, and I think it's such a horrid shame of him, seeing what he has got himself. But I suppose you are so good, he has no idea you are anything else!) So that the dim chance of those fine things in the next world does me no good, and though I've known some really nice girls, in my time, in this world, who wouldn't perhaps have been so hard on me as some people, none of them had a thin waist and a straight nose quite to my fancy. But you know, if I am to do any great thing in St. George's way, I needn't expect to do it without trouble, or ever to be rewarded for it with red lips. But the worst of all to me is that I have not pride or hope in myself. Meantime St.

[59] See "Job's Luck" in *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge,* ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (2 vols; Oxford, 1912), II, 957.

George's work is now coming fast into literal form, and among other matters, the girl I once spoke to you of is making her will, and her lawyer wants some proper form for St. George's Company to be expressed in, as well as the names of the Trustees. This, I fancy, must be drawn up now with some care to answer this on all other occasions. Shall William's lawyer do it, or mine? —Ever your loving

E Minor.

Letter 210

Brantwood, 10th August, 1875.

Dearest Isola,—Your sweet letter has done me so much good, specially the prettiest word about adopting me like Juliet;[60] it is so precious to me to be thought of as a child, needing to be taken care of, in the midst of the weary sense of teaching and having all things and creatures depending on one, and one's self a nail stuck in an *in*secure place. I *should* like to come to Broadlands and feel like that. But if I come, you must let me keep child's hours, and not even come down to dessert; you must let me have my dinner at your lunch time, making then any little appearance, or being of any poor little social use I can; then I must have my tea and bit of toast in my own room at your dinner time, and go to bed at my own time. I can do nothing now unless I keep these primitive hours; and am always hurt by any effort to talk or think in the evenings. It is very dear and wonderful in you to want to have me at all, and really I think you might like having me, so, knowing me to be quite comfortable. And if you—how I repeat myself!—if I could but feel indeed that you had a kind of motherly, being old in holiness of heart, feeling for me, it would be the best thing the world could now give me. And your telling me a little about yourselves is the best thing you can do for me: though I shall need always to be told of singing hymns by that river, for I shall never sing anything any more. I may like to hear it through my window, perhaps. I am doing some good work, when there is any weather, however,—things that you will like to see on your table, I hope. And I am getting a little stronger, lately. Write and tell me if William and you will let me have tea in my room.—Ever your loving

St. C.

[60] The Mount-Temple's niece, whom they adopted; she later became Madame Deschamps.

Tuesday. 5th [October, 1875][61]

My dearest Isola

I have William's kindest letter and your's, and I'm coming by the forenoon train tomorrow, arriving at ½ past one to be in time for lunch—*my* dinner—and I'm bringing, not Crawley, but an old darling of a Dutchman whom I've long known and had sometimes for a courier, for my servant—He won't be in anybody's way I think, belowstairs, except by mischance, never by presumption or wants—Crawley was in many ways, (some not wholly or possibly known to me,) less fit for Broadlands.

Joan was greatly delighted with a letter *she* got this morning too.

I have'nt time to write to you, mama dear, for I've so many books and things to pack up to bring home.

Ever your poor loving little boy.

[61] The month and year derive from Ruskin's entry (*Diaries*, III, 864) that he went to Broadlands on October 6, 1875. It was in that year that Ruskin was given his own room at Broadlands.

Letter 212

Oxford, November 16, 1875.

I want to find a school for a little girl[62] who has no papa, nor mama, nor granny, and nobbody [*sic*] to take care of her. I found her playing on a roadside bank at Abingdon when she was nine years old; now she's fourteen, but very little, and I think she's very good, or would be if she saw granny sometimes. I will pay for her schooling in any school you think best for such a child, anywhere about Romsey. She's four brothers or sisters—poor little things—in the Union at Abingdon, and must go in herself soon, if I don't take charge of her.

[62] For the poignant episode behind the little girl, see *Works*, XXVIII, 661.

Letter 213

Corpus Christi College
Oxford

5th Dec. 75

My dearest Granny

I *felt* as if I ought to have come through snow or fire to you, to keep my day. But I *think* that I ought to do, henceforward, always what I believe to be healthy and wise for myself; and to trust one's granny, and mamie, and people who care for one, to understand that this is well.

I would have come to you today through any labour or pain, but I hold myself bound not to run risk of serious harm —and I do find that even a couple of hours sedentary exposure to cold is very bad and dangerous for me. I will telegraph you now, therefore, when I *am coming* by what train I come. Do not expect me until I telegraph. The love of vital energy that can keep me physically warm is the chief sign of failure in me, as far as I can judge brought on either by the distress or the fatigue of past years. I am *working* today, in good spirits and writing the beginning of my commentary on the life of Moses with much zest. But I have no zest for snowballing or travelling,—I would come to see you and William, with as much real *will* in the matter as if Rosie were there— Only, if Rosie were there I should be warm all the way, and now I should be chilled. That literal and physical difference is the main one, to me, now.

Love to Annie and the children.

Kind regards to Mrs Goodall & the servants and I'm ever Williams and your good little boy.

Letter 214

Love to Annie & Juliet,—
and gratitude to all the servants

Corpus Christi College
Oxford

[Early February, 1876][63]

Dear Grand Papa

So many thanks for your sweet note—and I've a lovely one of Grannie's unanswered;—I can't answer with any of my heart today—and must not even begin work before answering somewhat—namely that they want me at Sheffield much more than—Grannie & you want me (well, they may!) and I must go there, if anywhere, *to stay* and I could'nt run down to my nursery, to run away again directly. But I never know but from day to day what I'm to do, or where I'm to go—and when my lectures here are over, perhaps, Rosie may order me to play a little—I don't know; only I am ever your and Grannie's loving little boy.

JR.

I'm more & more ashamed to use my S^{t} C. as I feel really naughtier everyday.

[63] The conjectural date is based on textual evidence suggesting that Ruskin has recently come to Oxford from a visit to Broadlands; this is corroborated in *Diaries*, III, 883. Also, he is soon to go to Sheffield. And the reference to Rose very probably reflects some spiritualistic experiences at Broadlands involving her "appearance" (Norton, II, 128-29).

Corpus Christi College
Oxford

[February 7, 1876][64]

My darling Grannie

Just read enclosed! —the end of it—on second leaf—and think how naughty of you to let your poor little boy "forget" to take your photograph! And please send me one directly. And please tell Grandpapa I really must have my pocket money—because I've lent—I mean, he must make that other boy Tom[65] pay me my pocketmoney because I want to buy some tarts.

Oh, grannie—if you only had seen how funny it was when I went into the cathedral yesterday with my masters hood on! —I had got it tucked under my arm, and D[r] Acland[66] the minute he saw it—pulled it right—and then it went all wrong together somehow and all the choristers were so amused!

Ever your loving little boy

[64] The textual reference to Acland on which the date is based is similar to an entry for that date in *Diaries,* III, 883, in which Ruskin speaks of lunching with Acland and attending cathedral services.

[65] An allusion, no doubt, to Sir Thomas Acland, one of the trustees of the St. George's Guild.

[66] Henry Acland.

Letter 216

Corpus Christi College
Oxford

10th Feb. 76

Dearest Grannie

Are you in town—and if so, might your little boy come on Tuesday instead of Wednesday?

He wants to dine with some other little boys—who play at being Bishops and—that kind of thing—at the Grosvenor Hotel—and he must be dressed as if he was quite old! but he's only your good little boy.

I've learn't some wise lessons to day Grannie. Love to Grandpapa.

Ever your dutiful St C.

Corpus Christi College
Oxford

13th February, 1876

My dearest, own, grannie,

I will come to you, and stay in your upper room, on Tuesday as I said. I have so much to tell you of things that have "chanced" to me, today, all gathering together for good, I can't tell you them all—before you hear the lecture,[67] which I do not doubt will interest you in the bringing together of old evidence about spirit power or at least instinctive power, in arrangement of colours. Things have been brought so to my hand for it—and today, I had to take the Sacrament in my chapel, here, and to be at evening service in my own Christchurch cathedral, for the first time obeying my Deans order to wear white surplice as Honorary Student. It lay—putting me in mind of a shroud, in the shadow of my room in the dawn of morning,—and I took out my missal and looked at my photographs, and then opened her letter to see what she would say. So she said "God *shall* bless us" (—underlined, the shall)—Then in the morning service—just look at the psalms, and the lessons were 1st Genesis, and—It shall be given 'unto this last.'

—Then, I got your sweet note—and a gift of a hundred pounds for St George, at breakfast from the very lady who had warned me against spiritualism and to whom I had answered "If anything is to be told me, only *one* spirit will bring it."

—Then, I had the power of buying, for fifty pounds, from Professor Wedgwood,[68] the most exquisite series of drawings

[67] Given first on February 17, 1876, at the London Institution. It is printed in *Deucalion* (*Works*, XXVI, 165-96).

[68] Probably Hensleigh Wedgwood (1803-91), philologist and one of the founders, in 1842, of the Philological Society. In his later years Wedgwood was a devout spiritualist.

of *Irish* missals I ever saw in my life: and lastly, just now, before sitting down to write to you, I opened *her* drawer to look for her sketch of the Madonna weed[69] with R and S[t] C.—and came on the textbook we used to read together. I have not opened it as far as I remember since her death. I said—Let me see what *this* will say to me. It opened at her death-day—on the words, "Lord, teach us to Pray."

So I'm coming to you on Tuesday. You know your note was even nicer than any other—because it said—"*own*" little boy. The discussion at the Metaphysical[70] is to be on Miracle-evidence!

I hope this will meet you in that room at Stanhope S[t]. where you looked for her, once.

Ever—with dear love to GrandPapa

Your dutiful S[t] C.
and loving little boy

I must be very quiet on the Wednesday, my lecture is all in bits. But I've no doubt I shall be taught to put them together.

[69] See *Diaries*, III, 884, n. 1.

[70] Ruskin's connection with the Metaphysical Society (1869-80) is given in *Works*, XXXIV, xxviii-xxx. He read several papers before this group.

Corpus Christi College
Oxford

S[t] Valentines! 76

Darling Grannie

After all, I can't come till Wednesday;—my diagrams won't finish themselves and such a quantity of things have happened to put my head awry—(or rather, straight on my shoulders and upright at last.)—but off my work, at any rate. I got one message after another yesterday, of the stronger distinctness as they went on, and this evening again— some from the Koran! —I dare not go to the debate on miracles; I am sure in my present mind I could'nt keep my temper and besides, I've abused Gladstone so in Fors[71] that I should be shy.

But Wednesday afternoon, D V without fail.

Ever dear Grannie
Your devoted little boy
S[t] C.

[71] See *Works,* XXVIII, 403, where it is noted that Ruskin withdrew his attack upon Gladstone. In a later *Fors* (*Works,* XXIX, 364) he apologizes generously for his remarks about Gladstone. While both men differed over many matters, each developed a signal respect for the other. In 1892 Gladstone considered Ruskin for Poet Laureate but dropped the idea because of Ruskin's poor health. For an interesting account of the relations between Ruskin and Gladstone see *Works,* XXXVI, lxxviii ff.

Letter 219

Greta Bridge

3rd May, 76.

Dearest Grannie

I have had nothing to tell you, till today, of good,—but at last the sun has come and the old Inn here is unchanged—and there is a window looking through blossom into the garden and up to Brignal woods,—and I had a walk up the glen yesterday, wholly quiet; nothing with voice of harm—or voice any wise except the Greta, and the birds. And I found, up the glen, the little Brignal churchyard, with its ruined chapel—and low stone wall just marking its sacred ground from the rest of the violet,—and the chapel untouched—since Cromwell's time—the river shining and singing through the east window—scarcely larger than a cottage's—and the fallen walls scarcely higher than a sheepfold—but the little pisciner and a stone or two of the altar steps left—and the window and wall so overgrown with my own Madonna herb that,—one would think the little ghost had been at work planting them all the spring.

And it's still lovely today, and I'm going to take Joan to see it. Please send me a little line—to Brantwood.

Ever your loving little boy.

Letter 220

Brantwood

25th May, 76.

My dearest Grannie

Have you *no* little ghost's word or work for me? Can't she come to *you* sometimes—If only le Pere Hyacinthe *would* open her little mind farther on some subjects!

—I forget which way the accent goes over Pere,—please dear Grande Mere, forgive your poor little boy—he *can't* do those accents.

Ever your good little Johnnie.

Letter 221

Brantwood

11th July, 1876

Dear Mr Temple

I don't quite understand Mr Rydings[72] accounts in last Fors. But I know I paid the Bagshawe and Talbot cheques out of my own balance and I must ask you to be kind enough to write me a cheque on the Union for £330, of St George's money,—the other balances we will let settle themselves as we go on. I have no time at present to write any but business letters, having undertaken all I am able for: but hitherto, remain able for it, D. G.

Ever your grateful
J Ruskin

The Rt Hon^r W^m Cowper Temple.

[72] The accountant of St. George's Guild. The fiscal arrangements of this organization seem consistently baffling. Ruskin is evidently referring to the cash account of the Guild as noted in Letter 67 of *Fors Clavigera* (*Works*, XXVIII, 658 ff.).

Letter 222

Venice

26th. Jan 77

My darling Grannie

I want to write to you sadly—but you *have* such a way you and Joanie—of playing me the same trick you did at Matlock, and leaving all the pepper out—of what I give *you*, now as of what you gave *me*, then.

Now look here—Here's a girl's letter just come, which must be answered without more ado—so you can't have any today Grannie—(but do look for the peppery bits in those old letters.)

I've written her rather a nice answer I think! You may read it, and send it on to her. I would give *anything* to know if shes pretty—it makes all the difference in teaching her—I'm afraid she's a fright,—how *am* I to find out—(Shes only 17.)—Ever your poor little boy.

Letter 223

Brantwood,
Coniston. Lancashire.

[July, 1877][73]

Darling Isola

Yes, you told me of your sorrow. There was a word in my letter to W^m^ meant to refer to it. Do not let him trouble himself just now with letters to *me:* but only release the trust, which Sir T. Acland has already done.

—How dear of you to like keeping my books. The Bible and Rogers[74] are all I want—if you can really let the rest stay. The first vol of the Bible is here. I had it travelling with me,—and there's no hurry for the others if there's anything you care to look at in them.

Would you really come to nurse me again? Its enough to make me do everything I should'nt directly!

Ever your loving S^t^ C.

[73] The textual reference to the resignation of William Cowper-Temple and Sir Thomas Acland from their trusteeships in St. George's Guild suggests the date. To judge from the June *Fors* (*Works*, XXIX, 137, n. 2) that event had occurred a brief time before, but Ruskin did not reach Brantwood until the middle of July, hence the month ascribed.

[74] A reference to the work of Samuel Rogers (1763-1855), the banker-poet, whose acquaintance Ruskin made many years earlier. Rogers presented copies of his poem *Italy* to Ruskin.

Brantwood,
Coniston, Lancashire
[July, 1877][75]

My dear Mr Temple

I think it is now about a year and a half or two years, since you signified to me your intention of retiring from the St G. Trusteeship,—and since that time ill or well—I have had to answer about two lawyers letters a month on this matter and received today the enclosed epistle asking *me* how much you have got!

It seems to me it is wholly Sir Thomas's and your business to know that—and as I am drawing a larch bud—and don't mean to leave off—to look for documents to establish a claim on you, I will beg you to determine what you have got, without further bother to me—and to transfer it to the new Trustees.

And for the rest—please think of me as dead—in, and to—all such matters—unless you want me to be dead to all others, too.

Ever affectionately Yours
J Ruskin

[75] For the date suggested see Letter 223, n. 73.

Letter 225

Brantwood,
Coniston, Lancashire
25th April, 1878

Dear & Kind Mr Temple

Your letter is just what is best & helpfullest to me, but these eight weeks of delirium[76] have left me 'contrite' in a quite to my own mind 'despicable' way and so sad that I forbid myself any expression of feeling at all—as it would only pain those to whom I would fain spare all concern about me till I'm better worth it.

One of the contritions that has beaten me very small, has been the thought how much I lost at Broadlands by not asking you to show me how Parliamentary and your own various estate-work was daily done by you without ever seeming to be hurried or tired—able always to come to encourage me in faggot making—or listen to the impertinentest things I used to make lunch intolerable with—or should have made it so to anybody less kind. But I might have learned & seen so much in those days!

I am better. Solomon says & so does Joan—but must write no more. I am in hopes of being good for a little more flower or stone work—some day—& not wholly grieving you & Isola. Ever yours

JR

[76] In March and April of this year Ruskin suffered severe mental disturbance. See *Works*, XXV, xxv-xxviii.

To Hone William Cowper-Temple
from

Brantwood
Coniston Lancashire
10th April 79

My dear Grandpapa,

Grannie says you are older than I am!—but that is all her mistake. I am a hundred years older since last year, and go tottering and grumbling about, and can't do anything, to speak of—though I see and know a thing or two still.

I have a kind letter from Acland today, of which the gist is that the first hint about giving up the Trusteeship came from me. I thought it my duty to direct your attention as well as his, to the main purposes of the Guild, as adverse in one grave respect, & the principles on which land is now held. But my own opinion is steady, and has never changed,—that you both should abide in your "places" (as first takers at my request)—saying,—"If this thing is not of God it will come to nought—if it be—it will be ill for us to have looked back from it." —I think this, let me repeat, in the most earnest manner—and there is time enough for you both to reconsider the matter, if you care to do so—before I write the next Fors. But, if you do not wish to reopen any such question, no possible responsibility can attach to you in retiring. I find English law perfectly just and rational in its spirit—it is only the stupidity of the common sort of lawyer that keeps business back. And whatever forms of safeguard have to be written, please give orders that they be so without delay.

Sincerest thanks for your affectionate letter,—but I am too ill to move from *this* home any more. I can decay on here quietly, but should be only a pain to you if I came to Broadlands.—I will write tomorrow to Isola.

I have been troubled to hear of your own grief,[77] & am ever your affectionate—poor little St C.

[77] The death of William's brother, Spencer Cowper, at Albano.

Letter 227

Brantwood, 28th Dec., '80.

Darling φιλη,—Your lovely letter has come, as often in old days, just when I most needed it, having got myself lost in a wilderness of thoughts again, in the further course of the book[78] of which the first number should reach you with this, and the wilderness is not even as good as Nebuchadnezzar's. I find no grass in it, nor sound of rain, and as many demons as ever St. Anthony—with no such power of defying them. It is a piece of blue sky, at least, to find that you still care so much for me as [to] tell me all this about William and you.

And Joan is *so* grateful also, and so happy in your rest, as in her own, for her little *Lily*[79] is now thought entirely out of danger, and has been so good that we are all grateful for the illness, that has showed us what the child was. I am not well, myself, however, these last ten days, and begin to wonder if the number of plans I have been forming are an omen that I shall finish none. I wonder, if I have to leave all behind, how much you will believe *then* of what I have been trying to tell so long. This Irish Vial is the beginning of troubles only. I am too tired to send more than dear love to you both. —Ever your devoted

J. Ruskin.

[78] In all probability Part I—entitled *The Bible of Amiens*—of *Our Fathers Have Told Us;* it consisted of a preface and first chapter and was issued on December 21, 1880. See *Works,* XXXIII, 1 ff.

[79] One of the children of Joan and Arthur Severn.

Letter 228

Brantwood,
Coniston. Lancashire.
2nd August, 81.

My dearest Isola

I am very thankful for your letter, except in its telling me you have been 'ailing'—but that would be the reaction after your anxiety for φιλος. I trust you will have happy autumn by the Sea.

I am fairly well again, except that I have lost much animal spirits; and am entirely forbidden some directions of thought—by all prudence—however, sometimes compelled into them by Fate,—Kind,—or unkind, or both. The last illness[80] was not so terrific as the first,—though quite as sad in the close—and *more* of a warning, since it showed the malady to be recurrent, if I put myself into certain lines of thought. The visionary part of it was *half* fulfilled—as soon as I was well enough to make it safe for me, by Lacerta's coming to see me[81] and finding—some manner of comfort (not to me comprehensible—but I was glad to see it,) in being with Joanie and me, and at this moment her old friend is here—Mrs Bishop,[82] whom I am instructing in the practical principles of Catholicism—I have done, I think—rather a nasty bit for—your *meeting* people, you know—!—in the number part coming out of the Bible of Amiens[83]—which shall be sent to William and you wet from the Press!

[80] Ruskin refers to the last of several severe mental attacks which plagued him in 1880-81. This "last illness" is specifically mentioned in Norton, II, 167.

[81] In spite of Margaret Ferrier Young's observation in *Letters of a Noble Woman* (London, 1908), p. 25, that the La Touches visited Brantwood for the first time in 1883, this letter indicates that Mrs. La Touche went there as early as 1881. Her reconciliation with Ruskin must have taken place, then, no later than six years after Rose's death, as Leon, p. 569, suggests.

[82] Most probably a cousin of Mrs. La Touche's mentioned several times in *Letters of a Noble Woman.*

I'm breaking some crockery in the barrack yard too, as well as in the conventicle—and generally beginning to recover myself in any directions promising a row—or any other manner of mischief—I assure you—you would be too much frightened if I were to come to Ball—Colman's mustard was nothing to what I'm "putting down," now—one of my bravest secretaries said it made (her) hair stand on end! —But, verily if I go anywhere it *must* be to France, for my work there. Joan sends her dearest love—but she has—yokes of *[illegible]* to *[illegible]* of course!—she's building nests for her chicks—and what not—She'll write herself—instantly, and I'm ever your lovingest

S[t] C.

[83] Apparently Part II of *The Bible of Amiens;* it came out in December, 1881.

Letter 229

Brantwood, 22nd Oct., '81.

Dearest Isola, —I am happy in your kind letter, and would fain that old times could return, but my two illnesses have changed all for me, and forbidden all kinds of excitement or exertion, except in directions instantly serving my main work. I have to resume the entire contents of *Fors,* with reference to the existing crisis, which it foretold to you all, in vain, and to gather my own past work in drawing or observing into forms available for my schools. I have a staff of good assistants now at work abroad, and hope to make the historical studies of the great churches such a body of evidence respecting the ages of Christianity as no one yet has conceived. But all depends, with God's help, on my allowing no distraction any more to break the courses of labour—and you know, you, for one, are a very distracting person! There will be some pieces about Aracoeli for you nevertheless!—the plan of *Our Fathers have Told Us* is more laid out than that of any book I ever wrote—and its three chief Italian sections—Ponte a Mare, Ponte Vecchio, and Aracoeli—will be done—as well as an old man may. With all resolution to be quiet, I shall have enough on my hands to keep me at least out of danger of monastic serenity . . . .

Letter 230

Brantwood,
Coniston. Lancashire.
11th Dec. 81

Darling Isola

Yes, I shall greatly like to come; and the more because I can wait till you are entirely ready to take me—the most convenient time for *you* will be the best for *me,* only it must be before the pantomimes are over. Ive promised to take Miss Graham[84] to a pantomime and to Henglers![85]—and she says—that—besides—she must be taken to the Alhambra and the Aquarium!—Of course—as far as my *own* movements are concerned they will be merely oscillations between Stanhope St and the Cardinal's—Aracoeli and the Vatican!

Also *you'll* have to take *me* to see my Queen of the May at Whitelands college.[86]

Dear love to φιλος

Ever your loving
St C.

[84] Frances Graham (later Lady Horner), the "F" of Ruskin's *Letters to M. G. and H. G.* (London, 1903). She appears often in the *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones,* ed. Georgiana Burne-Jones (2 vols.; London, 1906).

[85] A circus.

[86] Ruskin's interest in the Whitelands Training College in Chelsea is discussed in *Works,* XXX, 336 ff., where some of his letters to the various May queens are to be found.

Brantwood, 31st Jan., '86.

I am very thankful for that little word about Aracoeli, for, though I had made my mind up how I would treat the Autobiography,[87] and was resolved not to take advice about it! my law being that I would write what either I had pleasure in remembering or felt it a duty to remember; and though the plan of it, so traced, has come, I think, very beautifully, still I felt that many fine spirits and deep hearts would think me too open with sacred things, and that I ought simply to have told the public my public (virtually) life and the course of intellectual study which produced my books; but I determined that the book would be, on the whole, more useful if it showed the innermost of me, and I hope it will be very pretty in some places—but this little word of yours may perhaps let me dwell for another instant or two on what I have at present just told—and no more—at Rome. The chapter is headed Rome;[88] it would have been headed Aracoeli, but that title is already given to the chapter of *Our Fathers have Told Us*. Here's a letter of Sorella's,[89] just come, which I think you and Grandpapa will like to read.

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[87] *Praeterita*.

[88] Chapter ii of *Praeterita* (Part II).

[89] Francesca Alexander (1837-1917), an American expatriate whose *Roadside Songs of Tuscany* and *Christ's Folk in the Apennine* Ruskin edited and prepared for publication in 1885 and 1887 respectively. *John Ruskin's Letters to Francesca and Memoirs of the Alexanders*, ed. Lucia Grey Swett (Boston, 1931) throw an interesting light on another of Ruskin's poignant efforts at close friendship.

Letter 232

Brantwood,
Coniston, Lancashire.
[March] 29th [1886][90]

Darlingest Grannie

I'm so very thankful for the card letter—I really *was* very sad. There's any quantity of grief in me if I even dip for it—or down to it—but I'm rather happy now I've got to be able to skim over it—only sometimes—one wants to rest—and I only rest in darkness. Thankful that I can still be busy—and that I'm giving a great many people pleasure. My Florentine sorella is a great find; I forgot to tell mama that I had a Grannie, till last week, and she's as jealous as jealous can be.

I've got a little farm girl of 12, to be my wood-woman and she's very nice to see trotting up and down between the trees. And we've got a pretty governess for Lily and Lily herself is nice to see—and Violet[91] and the Baby[92]—but they're just the least bit too—talkative for an old di Pa.[93] But, I might be worse off, mightn't I? Only Grannie mustn't leave me so long by myself again.

Ever her poor little boy.

Dear love to Grand Papa

---

[90] The conjectural date is based on a letter Ruskin wrote to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, dated March 24, 1886 (*Works*, XXIV, 590-91), in which he speaks of the children of Mrs. Severn who reside in his house. The similarity between that letter and this is quite apparent.

[91] Violet Severn, Joan's daughter, born 1880.

[92] Joan Severn's son, born 1882.

[93] One of the many nicknames for Ruskin, it is a corruption of "dear papa."

Letter 233

Brantwood, 23rd July, '87.

Sweetest Isola,—Is there no Isola indeed where we can find refuge and give it? I have never yet been so hopeless of doing anything more in this wide-wasting and wasted earth unless we seize and fortify with love—a new Atlantis. Ever your devoted

St. C.

Letter 234

Sandgate, 30th May. [1888][94]

There never—never—in any time—was such a dear letter as that φιλης, & Isola's and Grannie's—And the poor Dovie had no word to answer. If he could have come! yes, but he could not—it would be only sorry to the φιλος & φιλη to see him now—But he can at least say how thankful he is still—for their patient & constant goodness to him,—how thankful—to see—as he did in those sweet Christmas shadows of them, how their own life is perfected.

Joanie is with me today—and thanks you both out of her own pure & hopeful heart—During this last year, I have felt more and more bitterly every hour,—how I have failed to you both—Alas to whom have I *not* failed?—but to you, who have loved & given and forgiven so much—that I should become at long last—only sorrow—Oh me—

I cannot go on. Perhaps Joanie can add more cheerful word.

Your poor Dovie

She will write later

[94] This poignant letter may safely be ascribed to 1888. After mental illness in 1887, Ruskin, accompanied by Arthur Severn, went first to Folkestone and subsequently to nearby Sandgate to attempt recuperation. Shortly after this letter was written Ruskin commenced what was to be his final Continental visit; from it he was brought back, seriously ill, in December, 1888, by Joan Severn.

APPENDIX

Publishing History of the Letters

1. Hitherto unpublished. Privately owned.
2. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Fitz William Museum, Cambridge University.
3. Hitherto unpublished. Privately owned.
4. Hitherto unpublished. Privately owned.
5. Published in *Works*, XXXVI, 462. Original untraced.
6. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Pierpont Morgan Library.
7. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Pierpont Morgan Library.
8. Published in *Works*, XXXVI, 464. Original untraced.
9. Published in *Works*, XVIII, xxxii. Original untraced.
10. Published in *Works*, XVIII, xxxii-xxxiii. Original untraced.
11. Hitherto unpublished. Privately owned.
12. Hitherto unpublished. Privately owned.
13. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Pierpont Morgan Library.
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22. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Pierpont Morgan Library.
23. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Pierpont Morgan Library.
24. Partly published in Leon. Privately owned.
25. Almost wholly published in Leon. Privately owned.
26. Partly published in Leon. Privately owned.
27. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Pierpont Morgan Library.
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38. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Pierpont Morgan Library.
39. Partly published in Leon. Privately owned.
40. Almost wholly published in Leon where it is misdated. Privately owned.
41. Partly published in Leon. Privately owned.
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44. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Pierpont Morgan Library.
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115. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Ruskin Collection, Bembridge School, Isle of Wight.
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150. Hitherto unpublished. Privately owned.
151. Hitherto unpublished. Privately owned.
152. Hitherto unpublished. Privately owned.
153. Hitherto unpublished. Original in John Rylands Library.
154. Published in *Works*, XX, lii-liii. Original untraced.
155. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Yale University Library.
156. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Pierpont Morgan Library.
157. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Pierpont Morgan Library.
158. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Pierpont Morgan Library.
159. Hitherto unpublished. Privately owned.
160. Published in *Works*, XXXVII, 27. Original untraced.
161. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Pierpont Morgan Library.
162. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Pierpont Morgan Library.
163. Published in *Works*, XXXVII, 31-32. Original untraced.
164. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Pierpont Morgan Library.
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177. Published in *Works*, XXXVII, 36. Original untraced.
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196. Published in *Works*, XXVII, 62. Original untraced.
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203. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Pierpont Morgan Library.
204. Published in *Works*, XXXVII, 110. Original untraced.
205. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Cornell University Library.
206. Published in *Works*, XXXVII, 110-11. Original untraced.
207. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Pierpont Morgan Library.
208. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Cornell University Library.
209. Published in *Works*, XXXVII, 152-53.
210. Published in *Works*, XXXVII, 173-74.
211. Hitherto unpublished. Original in John Rylands Library.
212. Published in *Works*, XXVIII, 661. Original untraced.

213. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Pierpont Morgan Library.
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218. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Pierpont Morgan Library.
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226. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Pierpont Morgan Library.
227. Published in *Works*, XXXVII, 333. Privately owned.
228. Hitherto unpublished. Privately owned.
229. Published in *Works*, XXXVII, 376. Original untraced.
230. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Pierpont Morgan Library.
231. Published in *Works*, XXXVII, 550-51. Original untraced.
232. Hitherto unpublished. Original in Mount Holyoke College Library, South Hadley, Massachusetts.
233. Published in *Works*, XXXVII, 592. Original untraced.
234. Hitherto unpublished. Privately owned.

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